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A MEMORIAL

OF

MINISTERIAL LABOUR.

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A MEMORIAL

OF

MINISTERIAL LABOUR;

BEING

A Selection of Discourses

DELIVERED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF PERTENHALL, BEDFORDSHIRE,

DURING THE YEARS 1823, 1824, AND 1825,

BY

THE REV. WILLIAM MUDGE, A.B.

CURATE OF RAMPISHAM, DORSET.

To stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.—2. PETER iii, 1.

SHERBORNE:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, BY HARKER AND PENNY; AND SOLD BY HATCHARD, PICCADILLY; SEELEY, FLEET-STREET; AND HAMILTON AND ADAMS, PATERNOSTER-ROW, LONDON; AND BY PENNY AND SON, SHERBORNE.

1827.

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DEDICATION.

If respectful deference, unwearied kindness, and christian sympathy, call for grateful acknowledgement; then is the Author of this Volume under very powerful and constraining obligation gratefully to acknowledge these truly estimable qualities in the People of his first and earliest charge. To them as a proof of his affectionate regard and earnest solicitude for their welfare, does he dedicate the Memorial of his labours at Pertenhall, beseeching, whilst he does so, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to make it a Means of spiritual and eternal good to not a few of its beloved inhabitants. *Their* acceptance and beneficial use of his Work will be sweetly refreshing to the Author's feelings. And in them there will be, he is sure, an association of idea and a recollection of circumstance, that will give to his Volume an importance and a worth which strangers to its

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Author can hardly be expected to appreciate. This will blunt the edge of unfriendly criticism and change the countenance of scorn. To live in the esteem and prayers of a few devoted followers of the Lamb is far, very far, preferable to living in the smile and popularity of a world the fashion of which passeth away. For such followers of the Lamb this Volume is principally designed. That it may revive the memory of the past, waken anticipation of the future, and strengthen the present purpose of the soul in the heaven-ward ways of Truth and Holiness, is the prayer of

Their once willing servant in the Gospel,

and

Their still faithfully attached friend

And brother in the faith and love

Of Jesus Christ,

W. M.

PREFACE.

Young in years and younger still in grace; 'small and of no reputation,' as is the Author of the following Discourses, it may seem to argue a want of judgment or of modesty, or of both, in him thus to court publicity: and more particularly so when it is recollected how many Volumes of Sermons are issuing continually from the Press; and Sermons, too, to whose elegance of diction, beauty of arrangement, and strength of argument, this Volume makes no pretences.

It becomes, therefore, the duty of the Author to assign the ground of this publication. He might repeat the hackneyed phrase of 'the entreaty of friends' and unaffectedly avow 'his extreme reluctance to appear in print:' but without availing himself of these or any other similar prefatory expressions, he shall simply and succinctly state—In A. D. 1823 it was the Author's happiness to be ordained a Minister of the Church of Christ. His ordination was the consummation of the wishes, the anxieties, and the hopes of many a preceding year of his life. With trembling, indeed; but, at the same time, with readiness and joy did he enter on the functions of the Ministerial Office. Most mercifully was he favoured with acceptance among the People committed to his charge. For a long period had that People been privileged to hear 'the joyful sound.' 'Fathers in Christ' had ministered to their spiritual necessities; and many of them, in

their rich experience of Christian Truth, had eaten even 'angels' food:' and yet, to their credit be it spoken, they could listen with patient willingness and affectionate forbearance to the lispings of a 'babe in Christ.' The Author laboured not in vain. *Very many* were brought to feel their helplessnesss, to glory in their Redeemer's excellence, and to walk in all pleasing. Will it be thought surprising that between them and their Minister an attachment of the tenderest and most pleasing kind was begotten? Respectful and obliging towards himself; and, more than this, 'alive unto God' and 'ready to every good word and work,' could their Minister do otherwise than cheerfully 'spend and be spent' for them? Could he do otherwise than love them, and endeavour by every prudent and becoming means to further their best, their highest and their noblest interests? *He did so*, may he, without any thing like disgustful arrogancy, be permitted to declare: and hence hearts were united, sensibilities were blended, and both Minister and People dwelt together blessing and being blessed. Plain and faithful as were his public Addresses, they loved his plain fidelity. If faults they had (and where does fault not mark humanity?) they desired their detection; they wished their exposure, and assayed to correct them. Will it then, it is again inquired, be thought surprising that the Author's separation from his beloved, and *worthily* beloved, flock, even if that separation were under circumstances the most favourable and auspicious, was *painful—very* painful? Painful *indeed* it was. Nothing short of 'the good

Shepherd's' care for his 'own' and the hope of a reunion with them in those pastures of glory which stretch boundlesssly beyond the pastures of grace, could, he is persuaded, have enabled him to sustain the trial. Finding himself, eventually, apart and distant from his once dear People, what could he do for them? 'Cannot you select and print for them some of your Sermons?' was a thought which one day crossed his mind when beseeching the eternal Majesty of heaven to bless and keep them. It was attempted: the prosecution of the Work was pleasant: it has been accomplished; and the Reader is now in possession of the Author's reason for appearing in print. The ultimate glory of God in the benefit of his servants, is the one sole aim and end of the present Volume.—As to the merits or demerits of the Volume others must judge. The Author is too conscious of imperfection to suppose himself not liable to censure and correction: he trusts, however, that censure will be kind and that correction profitable. Regard has been paid to both the selection and the arrangement of subjects: and the Volume, it is hoped, will be found to contain a body of scriptural, experimental and practical divinity. It must not be thought that the Author's oft repeated quotation of the Articles and Homilies of his Church is pedantic or affected: he loves the acknowledged Formularies of the Established Church: it pities him to find them unknown or little read; and both as a Clergyman and a Christian he cordially quotes and recommends them. Relative to the Sentiments divulged, explained, or inculcated in

these Discourses, the Author trusts they will be found both scriptural and orthodox. He has been led to their adoption gradually, even step by step. Never could he be *forced* to acquiesce in any doctrinal statement. The calmest and most sober consideration it is in his power to give, has preceded its reception and belief. *To* '*believe* a lie' is bad: to *preach* a lie is worse. The Author, therefore, shrinks not to avow that so far as he can judge, he has gathered his Creed from the Bible and been taught it by the Spirit of God. A Commentary on the Bible (though far from insinuating that he despises a Commentary) he does not possess nor has ever possessed. He calls no Man 'Master.' He assumes no name; he espouses no party. He prays and aims to be a simple, affectionate, and useful Minister of Jesus Christ. If there be any System of Religious Truth he prefers to others, it is that contained in the Liturgy &c. of the Church of England— NOT *because they are the Liturgy &c. of the Church of England*; but because their statements are accordant to Scripture, and calculated, at once to humble and renew the sinner, and to glorify and exalt the Saviour. This, it is confidently presumed, will be found the System of the Work here presented to the Public. Locality will sometimes be perceptible; but that could scarcely be avoided, nor did the Author always aim to avoid it. Craving now the indulgence of every candid and Christian Reader, he commends this Volume to his perusal, entreating the God of love and mercy to bless it to the furtherance of his present comfort and everlasting salvation.

Parsonage, Rampisham, June 30th, 1827.

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Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!

It is with feelings of a new and a peculiar kind that I now appear before you. Moved, as I trust, by the Holy Ghost to take the ministerial office on me, I yet assume it with fear and trembling. Above me, in the Heavens of glory, sits the Judge of hearts—the Discerner of thoughts and intents: Around me Faith perceives innumerable companies of Angels, and mingling with them the Apostles, the Prophets, the Martyrs, the Confessors, of the blood-redeemed Church: Present to the eye of sense are you, my people, and on me rests, with awful responsibility, the care of your immortal souls. Amidst "so great a cloud of witnesses," how shall I act, how acquit myself? Whom shall I fear? Whose glory shall I seek? Whence shall I derive my strength to labour? How shall I be taught what I myself must teach? What incense shall fill my censer, and what fire shall kindle it? Paul tells me: "*Our sufficiency is of God;*"[a] and what cannot we sustain, ourselves sustained by Power and Grace and Love and Truth Omnipotent? Assured of the sufficiency of his Master's grace,[b] Paul, though in himself and "in his

[a] Cor. iii, 5 [b] 2 Cor. xii, 9.

bodily presence, weak and contemptible," yet became the herald of salvation to the whole Gentile world.[a] "Though, therefore," says this great Apostle, "I preach the Gospel, *I* have nothing to *glory* of:" the glory of all my labours pertains to Him who condescends to use an instrument so feeble and unworthy as myself: "for necessity"—the sweet constraining influence of a Saviour's love—"is laid upon me; yea, *woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel.*"

May that gracious Spirit which inspired the sentiment and dictated the expression of St. Paul, enable me also with some measure of appropriate and personal feeling to say—"Woe is unto *me*, if *I* preach not the Gospel!"

These words naturally lead us to consider

I. The Ministerial Office itself;
And II. The Responsibility which attaches to it:

And I. *The* Ministerial Office *itself*:—

The office of the Christian minister is—"to preach the Gospel." This office no man taketh (or ought to take) to himself, but he only that is called of God.[d] Jesus Christ, the great author and subject of the Gospel, called his Apostles severally and particularly to the office and work of the ministry. To them was the commission given to "go into all the world, and to preach the Gospel to every creature.[e] Hence, they "could not *but* speak the things which they had seen and heard."[f] Each one might with propriety say with Paul, "I am *ordained* a preacher and an Apostle.[g] They authoritatively ordained others to their office. Paul committed the ministry of the word as a solemn "charge" to Timothy,[h] and commanded him to "commit *the same* to faithful men."[i] To Titus, too, was autho-

[a] Rom. xv, 18, 19. [d] Hebrews v, 4. [e] Mark xvi, 15.
[f] Acts iv, 20. [g] 1 Timothy ii, 7. [h] 1 Epis. i, 18.
[i] 2 Epis. ii, 2.

rity committed to "ordain elders in every city" of Crete.[k] Since the Apostolic days, there has ever been an order of men "separated," as Paul himself was, from worldly cares and secular pursuits, "to the Gospel of God,"[l] and whose one grand and exclusive office it is "*to preach the Gospel;*" and doubtless, till the redeemed of the Lord, the Church of Christ, be presented faultless before the presence of God's glorious Majesty, will this office be continued and perpetuated. The Gospel which we are authorised to preach is "the *everlasting* Gospel."[m] It was preached to Abraham.[n] It was preached in the wilderness of Sinai.[o] It *will be* preached till "there shall be time no longer:" nor even then will "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God" cease to be the object of grateful contemplation and adoring wonder to "the principalities and the powers of Heaven."[p] The Gospel will be "everlasting" in its truth, its value, and its consequences. This Gospel necessity is laid upon *me* to preach, and to *you*, beloved, is the Word of this Salvation sent. But, what is *the Gospel?* And what is it to *preach* the Gospel? *The Gospel* is "good tidings of great joy;" a "Word of Salvation;" a message of mercy: but, it can only be tidings of joy to the *miserable;* a word of salvation to the *lost;* a message of mercy to the *guilty.* Here, then, is at once implied our real character and situation. The very "Ministry of reconciliation" which God has committed to us, shews that we are *miserable, lost,* and *guilty* creatures. But though the Gospel finds us thus, it leaves us not the same. It is the wise and gracious means whereby a wise and gracious God designs to recover us from that deplorable state into which our sin has brought us. As "the Gospel of *the Grace of God,*"[q] it manifests the Divine favour and love. We see that though sin be

[k] Ch. i, 5.
[l] Rom. i, 1.
[m] Rev. xiv, 6.
[n] Gal. iii, 8.
[o] Heb. iv. 1, 2.
[p] Eph. iii, 10.
[q] Acts xx, 24.

"the abominable thing which God hates;" yet that he loves our souls and "willeth not" our death. As "the Gospel *of Christ*,"[r] it reveals a Saviour; an all-sufficient sacrifice for sin in that Saviour's death, and a life of endless blessedness and glory as the consequence of faith in him. As "the Ministration *of the Spirit*,"[s] the Gospel records "the promise of the Spirit" to work in our hearts genuine and unaffected penitence, operative faith, lively gratitude, love to the person of our Lord, and universal benevolence towards man. As "the Gospel *of Salvation*,"[t] it proclaims health to the broken hearted, deliverance to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and liberty to the bound. As "*a new and a better Covenant*,"[v] the Gospel insures the fulfilment of every relative and Christian duty. As "an *everlasting* Covenant,"[w] it secures to the Believer "all things"— sure and unfailing mercies. Its oath and promise are immutable. And as some strong and powerful odour revives the fainting senses of the body, so do "the immutable things" of God afford "strong consolation" to all who flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in the Gospel.[x] "Jehovah is the hope of his people."[y] "Christ is our hope."[z] He is the Alpha and Omega of our ministrations: "him we preach," nor can we be Ministers of the Gospel, if we *cease* to preach him.[a] "Ourselves" we preach not, "but Christ Jesus our Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesu's sake."[b] Jesus "crucified" it is our office to exalt: and while we "set him forth evidently crucified among you," his dying love must be motive sufficient for us to "warn every man, and to teach every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."[c] Such, briefly, is *the Gospel;* and now, what is it to *preach* the Gospel?

[r] Rom. i, 16. [s] 2 Cor. iii, 8. [t] Eph. i. 13.
[v] Jer. xxxi, 31, and Heb. viii, 8. [w] 2 Sam. xxiii, 5. Heb. xiii, 20.
[x] Heb. vi, 18. [y] Jer. xiv, 8. [z] 1 Tim. i, 1.
[a] Acts v, 42. [b] 2 Cor iv, 5. [c] Col. i, 28.

To preach the Gospel is to declare it *fully, plainly, kindly*. It is to declare it *fully*. "He that hath my Word," says God, "let him speak my Word faithfully."[d] And Paul, in accordance with this Divine direction, "shunned not to declare *all* the counsel of God,"[e] and "kept back *nothing*" that pertained to his office to declare. Equally faithful to our trust must we be. In all its parts and bearings must we preach the Gospel. Our system must be that of the Bible. We must call no *man* 'Master.' Nothing may we add to, nothing may we diminish from, the Testament of a dying Lord. Even if things be spoken that are offensive to man's depraved nature and carnal mind, and these things be agreeable to the revealed will of God, we must not shrink from a full and faithful declaration of them. Such is our office, that if we seek to please men, we cannot be the servants of Christ.[f] Is man depraved and helpless? Is there no health in us? We must fully declare it. Is the will of God the first moving cause of our salvation?[g] Cometh no man unto the Father but by Christ?[h] Cometh no man to the Son, except the Father which hath sent Him draw him?[i] Is man condemned because, on account of the perverse and obstinate depravity of his heart, he *will not* come to Christ?[k] Must we be born anew ere we can see, enter, or enjoy, the kingdom of God?[l] Must *all* the glory of our salvation accrue to our only Saviour?[m] And must the grace which brings salvation teach us to deny *all* ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, and to look for the re-appearing of our Lord, Jesus Christ?[n] Are these things so? Then must we fully and unhesitatingly declare them. In short, my brethren, we, as Paul was, must be "*bold* to speak unto you the Gospel of God."[o]

[d] Jer. xxiii, 28. [e] Acts xx, 27. [f] Gal. i, 10.
[g] Eph. i, 11. [h] John xiv, 6. [i] John vi, 44.
[k] John v, 40. [l] John iii, 3. [m] 1 Cor. i, 20, 31.
[n] Titus ii, 12, 13. [o] 1 Thess. ii, 2.

Moreover, we must declare it *plainly—not*, I mean, in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.[p] It is the language of human nature that says, "Speak to us smooth things, prophecy deceits."[q] Worded smoothly and disguised plausibly, many would even receive the truth: But, no; the Gospel which we preach is unaccommodating in its solemn verities; and therefore must "our speech and our preaching be *not* with enticing words of man's wisdom, *but* in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Our Divine Master spake plainly.[r] Paul, speaking of himself and his fellow-labourers in the Gospel, says, "We use *great plainness of speech*."[s] And great plainness of speech must *we* use, if we would either destroy the strong holds of the devil, or build up, on its most holy faith, the Church of Christ. It is here, we conceive, so many ministers of the Gospel fail—they overshoot the capacities of their hearers—use "high swelling words of vanity"—and "so speak unto the air," and spend their strength for nought. "In *simplicity* and with godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but, by the grace of God, *may we* have our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to *you*-wards."[t] If the *Law* was required to be written "*very plainly*,"[v] surely the *Gospel* should not be written or preached in *less* distinguishable characters. *Plainly*, therefore, must it be declared.

But, finally, we must declare it *kindly*. The ministry we sustain is (as we have before intimated) a ministry of *reconciliation*. The Gospel reveals a God of love and mercy. It invites, beseeches, entreats, sinful and rebellious worms to be reconciled to God. Its preachers, therefore, should be men of tenderness and love. Sacred are the sorrows of a penitent. Quick are the sensibilities of a newly awakened soul. With these it becomes us to sympathize. With "many tears"

[p] 1 Cor. ii, 13. [q] Isa. xxx, 10. [r] John xvi, 29.
[s] 2 Cor. iii, 12. [t] 2 Cor. 1, 12. [v] Deut. xxvii, 8.

did Paul fulfil his office ;[w] "with tears he warned ;"[x] and "with tears he wrote."[y] A greater too, than Paul, offered his "supplications with strong crying and tears,"[z] and with feelings of the tenderest kind He wept over the murderous Jerusalem.[a] With somewhat of the like compassion should we minister the Gospel of God. Our eyes should run down with tears when men keep not God's Law.[b] Day and night should we weep for the slain of the daughter of our people.[c] If we must reprove "the enemies of our Redeemer's cross," we should do it "even weeping."[d] Peace, holiness, and love should mark the ministerial character. "In love" should the truth be spoken ; and spoken in love, however plainly and fully, it will not offend whom it may be worth our while to please. Truth is lovely, and suffered to appear in simple loveliness, it will win, soften, console, and bless. "Good and gracious is the Lord: *therefore* will he teach sinners in the way :"[e] Let the minister of the Lord be "good and gracious"—kind and condescending too, and therefore shall *he* also teach sinners in the way.

Such, then, beloved, is the MINISTERIAL OFFICE: It is to preach *the Gospel;* and to *preach* the Gospel *fully, plainly, kindly.*

Come we to consider

II. *The* RESPONSIBILITY *which attaches to it:*—

"*Woe,* says St. Paul, is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel:" He imprecates a *woe* upon himself if he failed faithfully to discharge his office. Surely, then, the Apostle must have felt a responsibility of the most solemn and impressive kind attaching to his office. And, in fact, there is, however some, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram-like, aspire to the Priesthood,[f] and covet

[w] Acts xx, 19. [x] Ib. 31. [y] 2 Cor. ii, 4.
[z] Heb. v, 7. [a] Luke xix, 41. [b] Ps. 119, 136.
[c] Jer. ix, 1. [d] Phil. iii, 18. [e] Ps. 25, 8.
[f] Num. ch. xvi.

pre-eminence in the Church, God will not be mocked. No *Uzza* must put forth his hand to hold the Ark:[g] The *sons of Kohath* alone must bear it.[h] Awful things are written against such as run without being sent, and prophesy without being spoken to.[i] And "*cursed* is the man that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully,"[k] and "handleth his *Word* deceitfully."[l] We must be "*called of God*, as was Aaron," acceptably to minister in holy things. "*Jesus sent*" his disciples whither he himself would come. "The *Holy Ghost* said, *separate* me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto *I* have called them."[m] Thus the triune Jehovah is concerned in provisioning the ministerial office with teachers and labourers. Happy, then, is the man who can say with the Prophet, or rather with Messiah himself, "*The Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me.*"[n] Moved to take the office on us by "the Eternal Spirit," he will qualify us for it: we shall not run in vain: we shall not prophesy our own hearts' deceits: we shall have an unction from the Holy One to teach us all things necessary to be inculcated on others: we shall see our office to be superior in dignity and excellence to any earthly calling whatever: the honour of our Saviour-God; the salvation of immortal souls; the promulgation of divine truth; the extension of our Zion's borders; the interests of time and of eternity—are all involved in our office. Who, then, will say that a fearful responsibility does not attach to it? Who will not rather ask, "*Who is sufficient for it?*" And does not all this say to *me* 'Be faithful.' "*Take heed to the Ministry, thou hast received that* THOU *fulfil it?*"[o] Let me, however, point you to a portion of Holy Scripture most strikingly applicable to ministerial responsibility: "Son of Man, (says the Word of the Lord in Ezek.

[g] 1 Chron. xiii, 9, 10. [h] Num. vii, 9. [i] Jer. xxiii, 21, 40.
[k] Jer. xlviii. 10. [l] 2 Cor. iv, 2. [m] Acts xiii, 2.
[n] Isa. xlviii, 16. [o] Col. iv, 17.

xxxiii. 1, 9.) speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, when I bring the sword upon the land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet and warn the people; then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his *own* head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the *watchman see the sword come*, and blow *not* the trumpet and the people be *not* warned; if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the *watchman's* hand." (Now, mark, my Brethren:) "So *thou, O Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth and warn them from me.* When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man thou shalt surely die; if thou dost *not* speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but *his blood will I require at thine hand.* Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but *thou* hast delivered thy soul." See here the responsibility of our office and the indispensible necessity we are under of discharging it with fidelity! May we, with this Scripture full before us, "bring you another Gospel" than that of the Bible? May we inculcate our own fancies? May we "seek our own things and not the things of Jesus Christ?" May we be silent when we see a sinner exposed to the sword of divine justice, and treading heedlessly the brink of ruin? Shall the watchman of some earthly city, walk his constant rounds and answer, as the Prophet says, the cry, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" [p] and shall the Watchman of the *new* Je-

[p] Isa. xxi, 11.

rusalem, the *spiritual* Zion, be less alert, and indisposed to answer the enquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" If we would be saved "*from blood-guiltiness*"—if we would be "*pure from the blood of all men*"[p]—if we would escape "*woe*" unutterable, we *must* be faithful to our trust, and diligent—*humbly, earnestly, prayerfully,* diligent, in the discharge of its solemn and important duties. But I wish you to see what a clergyman should be from the ordination service of your own church. When authorised to preach the Word of God and to minister amongst our people, our Bishops and Fathers say*—"We exhort you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you have in remembrance, into *how high a dignity*, and to how *weighty an office and charge*, ye are called: that is to say, to be *Messengers, Watchmen,* and *Stewards* of the Lord; to teach and to premonish, to feed and to provide for the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep, that are dispersed abroad, and for his children, who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever." Then follows a mention of "the *horrible punishment*" that will ensue from "*negligence*" in the ministerial office. Hence we are exhorted "*never to cease our labour, care, and diligence,* till we have done *all that in us lieth*" for the souls committed to our care. "*Worldly* cares and studies" are we to set aside. "A mind and will thereto" we cannot have of ourselves: "therefore," it is added, "ye *ought* and *have need* to pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit." "Doctrine and exhortation we must gather out of the Holy Scriptures, whilst *our* OWN *life* must be agreeable to the same." "WHOLLY," in short, must we "apply ourselves to *this one thing,* and draw ALL our cares

* The reader is desired to refer to the ordination service of the Church itself, and with the *exhortation to Priests* to mark the *questions* which follow it.

[p] Acts xx, 26.

and studies *this way.*" How exactly does this accord with the conduct of those who "*gave themselves* CONTINUALLY *to prayer and to the ministry of the Word*" in the best days of the Christian Church! How beautifully significant, too, is that expression of Paul, "ONE *thing I do!*"[q] And how does all this declare the responsibility of the ministerial office. If "the fruits of the Spirit," should be more than usually abundant in any character whatever, it is that of the Ministerial. Our own and others souls to keep: a world of ignorance, prejudice, and sin to overcome: a crafty and designing Adversary to detect, expose, defeat: a Saviour to glorify and serve: "a fiery trial to endure—an account of our Stewardship to give—who needs not to tremble in the view of things like these? who needs not to cry mightily for help? who needs not to say—"Lord, help *me!*" Here is the "worm Jacob, threshing the mountains."[r] Here is the "earthen vessel" bearing "riches of grace."[s] Here is one whom "they have made Keeper of the vineyards," who with his carefulness for others must keep his "own vineyard" too.[t] Well may—not a Hophni and a Phinehas only,[v] but even a Moses,[w] a Jeremiah,[x] and many a one that labours even "with *his spirit* in the Gospel," pause with fearful anxiety to think on the responsibility which attaches to the Work of the Ministry. The multiplied "*Fear not*" of the Bible alone can encourage and sustain our fainting heart. "*Send by whom thou wilt send,*" should we say, did not the Lord add, "*I* will go with thee."[y] "EVEN the *youths* would faint, and the *young men* utterly fail," did we not feel assured that our Redeemer's strengh would be perfected in our weakness. *Strong*, then, IN THE LORD and *in the power of his might*, we appear before you;—we dare to sustain our office with all the responsibility attaching to it,

[q] Phil. iii, 13. [r] Isa. xli, 15. [s] 2 Cor. iv. 7. [t] Cant. i, 6.
[v] 1 Sam. ii, 22, &c. [w] Exod. iii, 11. [x] Jer. i, 6.
[y] Exod. xxxiii, 14.

and "*by your prayers and the supply of the spirit of Christ,*" we will trust to "save both ourselves and them that hear us."[a] "*Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!*"

Fearing rather I have already intruded too long on your time and attention, there is yet, however, one obvious REMARK which, in closing, I beg to make:—

If a "woe be unto *me* if I PREACH not the Gospel," woe will be unto *you* if you RECEIVE not the Gospel! The word we preach will prove to you *either* a savour of life *or* of death. If it does not prove the one, it will prove the other.[a] We shall be "a sweet savour unto God" in our ministrations of the Gospel, "whether you will hear or whether you will forbear." Our master will judge us—not according to our *success*, but according to our *fidelity*. In those whom we instrumentally "win" to Christ, his "name and word will be magnified above all things." "Mercy," in *them* will be "set up for ever." Where our word is no "savour of life," but any through wilful blindness and determined wickedness, "reject the counsel of God against themselves," even *there* we shall not be other than "a sweet savour unto *God*," for they perish—not because we blew not the trumpet of alarm, but because "they choose darkness rather than light," and love "the wages of unrighteousness." "Believe, then, in the Lord your God, so shall he be established: believe his prophets, so shall he prosper."[b] The Gospel is a joyful sound—cheering and exhilirating as the silver trumpet in the year of Jubilee, *to them that know it.*[c] On the contrary, a woe of untold agony awaits "the *neglect* of so great salvation."[d] Oh! that ye may "savour the things of God!" with meek heart and due reverence may ye receive his Holy Word! May we be *mutually* faithful. While *I* preach Jesus and him crucified, may *you* take up your cross and follow

[a] 1Tim. iv, 16. [a] 2 Cor. ii, 15, 16. [b] 2 Chron. xx, 20.
[c] Ps. 89. 15. [d] Heb. ii, 1, 4.

Him! While *I* profess to act under the guidance and governance of the Eternal Spirit, may *you* feel him working within you both to will and to do! While I endeavour humbly to "teach you the good and the right way," may I be favoured to go before you in it! And when the account of your immortal souls is required of me, may we together stand at our Lord's right hand, and be it mine to say, "Behold me and the children whom thou hast given me!"

DISCOURSE II.

THD DIVINE LAW A TEST OF CHARACTER.

I JOHN III. 4.

Sin is the transgression of the Law.

PEOPLE, in general, are little, if at all, aware of their real state or condition, In the knowledge of the world and their vocations in it, they must be allowed, commonly, to be sufficiently informed: but in the knowledge of themselves, of God, of the way of access to him and reconciliation with him, of that eternally enduring world whither we are going, and of our capacity to enjoy its eternally enduring pleasures, they will be found, on enquiry, miserably wanting and deficient. Men may even "understand all mysteries"—may range the walks of Science, may follow the Stars in their courses, may become acquainted with all the various histories of all the countries of the Earth, and in short, may "have all knowledge," and yet, if destitute of "the *Spirit* of wisdom," be none other than "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." The standard too, by which many judge themselves is erroneous. "*What will* MAN *think of me?*" is the language of a heart alienated from God, and naturally averse to spiritual excellence. Hence, how often do we hear persons "measuring themselves *by* themselves, and comparing themselves, *among* themselves, and from the admeasurement and comparison drawing a conclusion favourable *to* themselves. 'Oh! we are no worse than others: we are better than many whom we could

mention: if it fares not well with us, how will it fare with them?' are expressions well befitting such a procedure. But, on the authority of an Apostle, we say, "those who measure themselves *by themselves*, and compare themselves *among themselves, are* NOT WISE."[a] "*To the* LAW *and to the testimony: if they speak not according to* THIS WORD, *it is because there is* NO LIGHT *in them*:"[b] it is because no morning of gracious visitation hath dawned upon their souls, and they, therefore, in the pride and ignorance of their hearts, laud and exalt themselves. God's *law*, and that law especially as "magnified" in the life and character of his beloved Son, is the alone legitimate standard to which we must refer in the examination of our state, and the estimation of our goodness. *This* is "the glass" in which alone our "natural face" may be satisfactorily discerned; and *its* testimony concerning us will be the only true description of our moral likeness.

May our consideration of the Law at this time increase our acquaintance with ourselves, and further the best interests of our immortal souls! "Whosoever," says St. John, "committeth sin transgresseth also the Law; for, *Sin is the transgression of the Law.*"

We purpose to notice

I. The Law itself:
And II. The Transgression of it.

And I. *The* LAW *itself*:—

The word "Law" is applied to different things and used on various occasions in holy Scripture. We read of a Law written on the heart;[c] which means, the Law of Nature or the Principles of natural conscience. We read too of "a Law in our members"[d] which is the propensity of our fallen nature to evil. In John i. 17. we read that "the law was given by Moses;"

[a] 2 Cor. x, 12. [b] Isa. viii, 20. [c] Rom. ii, 15. [d] Rom. vii, 23.

and here the law comprehends the moral, the ceremonial, and judicial precepts of God. "The law" mentioned in our text, we believe to be the decalogue, or the ten *moral* precepts exclusively. *This* law, therefore, it is which forms the subject of our present discussion. Now, concerning God's moral law, we observe that it was originally graven on the fleshly tables of man's heart This it was that constituted man's resemblance to the Deity. "God created man in his *own image*,"[e] that is, in his *moral* likeness. There are attributes of the Godhead uncommunicable to the creature. We never read that man was omniscient or omnipotent: and yet we do read that "in the *image of God* created he him" It must, therefore, be in sentiment, in taste, in judgment, in enjoyment, that Adam resembled his Almighty Maker. *The same mind* was in man as was in God.* Between them existed a solemn covenant: the only command expressly revealed in word was, "Thou shalt not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil;"[f] and this was of the prohibitory kind, and therefore the easier to be kept. Hence the covenant which existed between the infinite Creator and his creature Man, is called *a Covenant of Works*, because *Life* was to reward obedience to its precept, *Death* to be the penalty of the Law's transgression.[g] This covenant Adam brake: immediately Life was forfeited; Death was incurred; the Law was erased from the heart; the Divine likeness lost, and that which was once the fairest and most beautiful part of God's creation, became a sinful and unholy thing. The Covenant having been made with Adam as a *public* person, as the *father* of mankind, not only himself fell by his violation of God's Law, but his posterity, descending

* To this state, it will hereafter appear, the *Gospel* is designed to restore us. See Phil. iii. 5.

[e] Gen. i, 27. [f] Gen. ii, 17. [g] Rom. v, 12, 20.

from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell in the fall of their father. "In Adam all die."[h] The law, however, was still in force: its transgression must be expiated or its penalty endured. It could no longer be the article of a covenant: It was broken; and it could only now condemn. It ceased for ever to be with us a covenant of works. And to shew us the greatness of our fall, the depravedness of our nature, the extensiveness of our guilt, God was subsequently pleased more fully to reveal his Law. Revealed, however, in what age soever it might be, it would still be the transcript of the divine mind—it would still manifest the moral features of the Deity, and shew us how glorious once was man, and into what misery we are fallen. "I CHANGE NOT," saith the Lord:[i] His law, therefore, in its requirements, its obligations, and its penalties, must, like himself, be changeless and unalterable. To "love the Lord our God with ALL our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves," can never, to all eternity, be other than our bounden duty, conducive to our happiness, and perfective of our nature. And these "two commandments" are the sum and substance of the Moral Law. The history of the Law's promulgation, and the several particular precepts of it, you will find in Exodus xix. and xx, chs. "*God*," amidst thunders and lightnings and the sound of trumpets waxing louder and louder, as indicative of the Eternal's presence, "*Spake these words.*" "He declared anew his Covenant,"—not now made with Man, but with Man's Redeemer; whom ceremonies and sacrifices, for the time being, were to foreshadow; "even ten commandments, and he wrote them on tables of stone."[k] "The tables were the work of God; and the writing was the writing of God."[l] But,—

[h] 1 Cor. xv, 22. [i] Mal. iii, 6. [k] Deut. iv, 13. [l] Exod. xxxii, 16.

mark the awful wickedness of the human heart, see how surely the Law was blotted thence!—In the presence of their God, whilst Moses was with him in the Mount, and the thunders of Sinai were yet tingling in their ears, the Israelites "made a calf, and worshipped the molten image!"[l] In holy indignation Moses "cast the tables out of his hand and brake them beneath the Mount."[m] Thus significantly, as we conceive, declaring how in ten thousand instances mankind had broken the commandments of their God and Sovereign. The Law, however, was re-written and preserved.[n] "Very plainly," too, was Moses required to transcribe it;[o] and this book of the Law was henceforward to be the standard of moral worth and the directory of human conduct to all ages and generations. Joshua meditated on it.[p] Ezra was a "Scribe in it."[q] It was "a light and a lamp" in the days of Solomon.[r] Isaiah referred to it.[s] "Concerning the Law of his God," was fault found with Daniel.[t] Jesus came—"not to *destroy*, but to *fulfil* and to *establish*, the Law."[v] Christ is its "end;"[w] and us hath he redeemed from its curse.[x] In tranquil and sweet security may we, therefore, *now* contemplate the Law;—view unappalled its pure, spiritual, and strict severity. We are *really*, as Moses was *figuratively*, hid in the cleft Rock of our Salvation. A fissure in Horeb screened him from the terrors of the Lord; a crucified Jesus is our refuge.[y] In Him we may dare to hear the Apostle Paul declare,—"*The Law is holy, and the Commandment*—alluding, probably, to that searching and condemning precept, '*Thou shalt not covet*'—*holy, and just, and good.*"[z] Let us then, from these words, a little more particularly consider the nature of the Law.

[l] Acts vii, 41. [m] Exod. xxxii, 19. [n] Exod. xxxiv, 1.
[o] Deut. xxvii, 8. [p] Ch. i, 8. [q] Ch. vii, 6.
[r] Prov. vi. 23. [s] Ch. viii, 20. [t] Ch. vi, 5.
[v] Matt. v, 17. [w] Rom. x, 4. [x] Gal. iii, 13.
[y] Comp. Exod. xvii, 6, xxxiii, 22, with 1 Cor. x, 4.
[z] Rom. vii, 12.

It is *holy*;—*so* holy, that it detects adultery in a thought,[a] and murder in a feeling of anger.[b] A covetous desire is declared to be idolatry, and the object coveted an idol.[c] Well, therefore, may the Apostle say, "The Law is *spiritual*."[d] Spiritual, indeed, it is, and more so than the generality of mankind have any idea of. Few believe that it has to do with the affections, purposes, and desires of the inner man no less than with the conduct of the outer. That it *has* is clear; because, while "Man looketh on the *outward appearance*, the Lord looketh on the *heart*."[e] Our state and disposition of mind determines our character with him: and therefore the Law whereby he governs us must be such as will extend to "the imaginations of the thoughts," and to the principles of action. The Law must, then, like its Author, be pure, spiritual, and *holy*.

It is, moreover, *just*. The Sovereign Lord of all has a right to the homage and the worship of his creatures. With whatever Law he governs them, their obedience should be prompt and willing. He must be just in all that he brings upon us.[f] 'Why,' we sometimes hear it said, 'Why does the Almighty give us a Law we find it impossible to keep? Why not impose on us less rigorous commands?' Why? because He could not. Must not the Law of a righteous Governor be like himself, just and righteous too? If the Law be rigorous in its exactions, and we find it a yoke grievous to be borne, the fault is in *us*, not in *it*. "God made man upright,"[g] and ere our uprightness was lost, the Law was easy to keep, and delightful to obey. Now "it is weak through the flesh;" and the Law cannot do other than require either a perfect, sinless, uninterrupted obedience to its commands, or pro-

[a] Matt. v. 28. [b] 1 John iii, 15. [c] Col. iii, 5.
[d] Rom. vii, 14 [e] 1 Sam. xvi, 7. [f] Neh. ix, 33.
[g] Ecc. vii, 29.

nounce a righteous sentence of condemnation on our violation of them.[h]

But, although the Law be thus holy and just, it is, nevertheless, *good*. It is good in its origin; it is good in its nature; it is good in its design. It was an unspeakably precious mercy in God to reveal his mind and will more fully after his Law had been violated by Adam. His "*goodness*" did the Lord proclaim when he passed by Moses in the Mount.[i] "Wondrous things" did David see in God's Law.[k] Nor will any one acquainted with the benevolence of the Divine Character say that "good" is *not* the word of the Lord which he hath spoken. In all that He commands He designs the happiness of his people. Where He says, 'Do this,' He says in other words, 'Be happy.' The spirituality of the Law discovers us to ourselves; the rigour of the Law awakens our fears; the goodness of the Law kindly shuts us up to the faith of Jesus. Who, then, will not "consent" with Paul, "that it is *good*?"[l] Surely "*the Law of the Lord is perfect*, CONVERTING THE SOUL: *the testimony of the Lord is sure*, MAKING WISE THE SIMPLE. *The Statutes of the Lord are right*, REJOICING THE HEART: *the Commandment of the Lord is pure*, ENLIGHTENING THE EYES. *The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the Judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.*"[m]

Such is *the Law:* We are to notice

II. *The* TRANSGRESSION *of it.*

"The transgression of the Law is SIN." Now here we have an infallible guide to the knowledge of *our real character* and *our just desert.*

We may hence learn *our real character.* Naturally we are "lovers of our ownselves; boasters; proud; heady; highminded."[n] We see not the purity and the strictness of the Divine Law. "Satan hath blind-

[h] Rom. viii, 3. [i] Exod. xxxiii, 19. [k] Ps. 119, 18.
[l] Rom. vii, 17. [m] Ps. 19, 7, 9. [n] 1 Tim. iii, 2, 4.

ed our eyes."[o] Hence we judge ourselves "rich and increased with goods; and *know not* that we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."[p] Our iniquity, like that of Ephraim's, "is bound up; and our sin is hid:"[q] we perceive not its aggravated depth and extent. Many are favoured with a natural amiableness of temper and disposition. Education, too, polishes the mind and manner. No gross immoralities may mark the outward conduct. In transactions too, of a worldly kind, there may be much that is really estimable. This glare of external goodness suffices. We are pleased with ourselves, and, it may be, disposed readily to say to many a one whom we deem our inferior, "Stand by thyself; come not near to me: for I am holier than thou art."[r] But not in our *own* eyes only may we appear to be good; others, too, "through the ignorance that is in them," may deem us the same: call us good sort of people,—extenuate our vices, and magnify our virtues. Thus are we deceitful and deceived. But "God seeth not as Man seeth." "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men:" but what avails our self-justification? "God knoweth our hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."[s] Then it naturally follows that any rule of conduct, however highly esteemed among men, cannot be the criterion of our spiritual state. Judged by its white-washed exterior, the sepulchre may appear fair and beautiful;[t] but what is its state internally? "As a man *thinks*, so is he."[v] Do our thoughts rise easily and spontaneously to God? Do we find them flowing in one unvarying tide of love and gratitude, to the Author of all being and existence? Is His service our perfect freedom? Are His ways and paths to us ways of pleasantness and paths of peace? Is His Law our

[o] 2 Cor iv, 4. [p] Rev. iii, 17. [q] Hos. xiii, 12.
[r] Isa. lxv, 5. [s] Luke xvi, 15. [t] Matt. xxiii, 27.
[v] Prov. xxiii, 7.

delight?[w] "Judge *ye*," Beloved. Distinguish between natural, moral, educational, and *spiritual* goodness. The latter alone determines our character with God. And how deficient in *spiritual* good we are, the Law of God will determine. From the opening of our eyes on the light of Heaven, till they close again in the darkness of Death, does the Law demand a full, entire, and undeviating conformity of heart and life to its precepts. The least possible deviation from the Law (if we can imagine *any* deviation from the Law to be a light or trivial matter) in thought, in word, in deed, is *sin*. "*All* unrighteousness is sin;"[x] and sin of any kind or degree is a transgression of the Law, and a transgression of the Law subjects us to its penalty. Now, who will pretend *not* to have transgressed the Law? Is any one amongst us without sin? If not,—where is our right either to be pleased with others' praises or to commend ourselves. See a description of the natural heart in Mark vii, 21, 22. Every precept of the Moral Law is equally authoritative and binding. "He that said, do not commit adultery, said ALSO, do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgessor of the Law."[y] And the same reasoning holds good of any other precepts of the moral code Hence it is that "whosoever shall keep the *whole* Law, and yet offend in *one* point, he is guilty of all."[z] It is the *disposition* to offend which the Law condemns: and hence there may be an universal opposition to the Law and a determined rebellion against the Lawgiver himself *in the heart*, where the *conduct* is morally decent and decorous. "A breaker of the Law,"[a] therefore, may every child of Adam be denominated. "The righteousness of the Law" we have lost—totally and for ever *in ourselves*—as a ground of preference and glory. The "God I thank thee" of the Pharisee, we

[w] Rom. vii, 22. [x] 1 John v, 17. [y] James ii, 11.
[z] James ii, 10. [a] Rom. ii, 25.

must totally and for ever disclaim. "In many things we offend all."[b] We are conceived in sin: born in sin: sin is the element in which we naturally move and have our being; we love it: we endeavour to lessen its enormity: we make it venial and tolerable: the holy, just, and righteous Law of our dread Sovereign we accommodate to our prejudiced and depraved opinions: we justify ourselves and despise others: we say not "*Tamar is more righteous than I*,"[c] but, "*God I thank thee that I am not as other men are:*"[d] all which tends evidently to shew our *real character*. We inherit only our fathers' *de*generacy: their *re*generacy they inherited only for themselves. To our original depravity we have added actual transgression; and making *the Law of God*—NOT *our own partial opinion*, or *the judgment of our fellow-creatures*—the test of our character, we shall find it, doubtless, really to be that of 'miserable sinners.'

And what, as such, is our *just desert?* This, too, we were to learn from the transgression of the Law. And in this particular the world is no less mistaken than it is respecting our character and state before God. "The world loves its own."[e] It cannot, therefore, be expected severely to censure those who love it. But our Bible says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."[f] And again, "The wages of sin is death."[g] And in accordance with the Bible our Church says, "The fault and corruption of the nature of every man deserveth God's wrath and damnation."[h] This, indeed, is said of "*Original* Sin:" but, with equal propriety, we conceive, it may be said of *actual* sin: for "*Cursed*, it is written, *is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.*"[i] Here is the thunder of Sinai rolling over our affrighted consciences. Who, of us all, *hath* kept the

[b] James iii, 2. [c] Gen. xxxviii, 26. [d] Luke xviii, 11
[e] John xv, 19. [f] Ezek. xviii, 4. [g] Rom. vi, 23.
[h] Art. ix. [i] Gal. iii. 10

commandments written in the Law? Who *does* keep them? Who, by any power or ability in himself, *can* keep them? And if the desert of one sin be death—what must be the desert of multiplied and innumerable transgressions? Oh! who would not be interested in "*the Law of the Spirit of Life*,"—*that* Law which "frees us from the Law of sin and death?"[k] We have a Law-fulfiller—even Jesus.[l] Through his obedience unto death, mercy beams through all the terrors of Sinai upon the regenerate and believing sinner. Well, however, is it for us to see our desert, in order that we may the more gratefully value our deliverance from it. A view of what we *are in ourselves*, will tend to shew us what we *were once in Adam*, and what we *may be in Christ*. In the Seed promised to the woman; in the lamb that Abel offered; in the virtual sacrifice of Isaac; in all the ordinances of the Jewish Church; in every sacrificial fire that blazed; and by every victim therein consumed, we see at once the justice of an offended God, the unyielding strictness of His righteous Law, the shadow of a greater and a more effectual offering, and the meritorious means of a full and everlasting recovery from all the consequences of our destructive fall. While, then, our consideration of *The Law itself*, and of *The Transgression of it*, constrains us, as needy creatures, individually to cry, "God be merciful to *me* a sinner;"—let the Law do for us what the Baptist did for the multitudes of Judea—point us to our Lord and Saviour—cheer our humble, contrite spirits with the words, "*Behold the* LAMB OF GOD, *which taketh away the sins of the World!*"—and encourage us to hope that the Law we have transgressed shall be re-written in all its eternal excellence on our hearts, and we ourselves stand once more and for ever "perfect and complete in all the will of God."

[k] Rom. viii, 2. [l] Ps. 40, 8.

DISCOURSE III.

ON JUSTIFICATION.

JOB XXV. 4.

How then can Man be justified with God?

How a Man can be justified with God, is, perhaps, of all others, the most important enquiry that can occupy our attention. Some things we may be safely ignorant of or mistaken about: but ignorance or mistake about the matter of our justification with God, will prove ruinous to the peace and safety of our souls. And yet how lamentably ignorant, how lamentably mistaken, many people are about it! and *that* not only where the truth lies buried under the rubish of Popish, Mahomedan, or Heathen error, but in a country calling itself Protestant, and where the pure Word of Christ is preached and His Sacraments are duly administered. It is utterly useless for the Ministers of Religion to suppose their people to be well or generally acquainted with the manner of our acceptance with God. A very little observation will prove the contrary. All, indeed, will pretend to know it, but, naturally, it will be found, no one knows it. What, then, is our duty? Our duty is to shew you, as easily and simply as words will allow us,—"*How a man can be justified*

with God." And to bring the subject of Justification full before you at this time, I shall say

I. What Justification is:
II. How a Man cannot be justified:
III. How alone he can be justified:
And IV. Why he can be justified in no other way than the way in which he is justified.

I am to say

I. *What* JUSTIFICATION *is*—

Justification is---*the being accounted righteous though we are not so.* We are allowedly depraved and sinful creatures. Naturally and practically, we are such. "The *heart* is wicked,"[a] and since "*out of it are the issues of life,*"[b] the streams must necessarily share the impurity of their source. And however dissimilar we may be one from another in sentiment, taste, and habit, "the *nature* of *every* man born into the world" is radically corrupt. "There is (in this particular) no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."[c] But, when brought into a justified state, we are treated as if we were altogether righteous. God "sees no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel."[d] Our "sins and our iniquities He remembers no more."[e] In the pure eye of infinite Holiness itself we appear "without spot."[f] The Church collectively will the Redeemer of sinners "present to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish."[g] Cleansed and purified, the Church, "as a *chaste* Virgin," will be united unto her Lord in the bonds of an everlasting union. "To her it will be granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is *the righteousness* of saints."[h] And whose is this righteousness?

[a] Jer. xviii, 9. [b] Prov. iv, 23. [c] Rom. iii, 22, 23.
[d] Num. xxiii, 21. [e] Heb. viii, 12. [f] 1 Pet. i, 19.
[g] Eph. v, 27. [h] Rev. xix, 8.

From whom or whence is it derived? Not surely from ourselves or any remaining excellence in Human Nature: for "*all* OUR righteousnesses are as filthy rags,"[i] and by our own Confession, "there is NO health in us." We must, therefore, be accounted righteous, and justified with God, by other merits than our own. Now to make this the more simple, and easier to be understood, let us suppose a person to be suspected of some criminal deed: he is apprehended and lodged in jail: at a time appointed, he is brought to the bar and arraigned: he is charged with the crime; the trial proceeds; evidence is heard; the case is closed:—If the prisoner be proved innocent of the charge laid against him, we should say, he was acquitted or justified from it:—if, on the contrary, he be found guilty and condemned for it, he is remanded to his prison, and there, with fearful expectation, to await the execution of his sentence. In the mean time, some powerful and benevolent individual intercedes for him with his Prince: "bowels of compassion" are moved for him: a pardon is procured; the guilty criminal is forgiven; his forfeited liberty and life restored. Now, though guilty, he would be treated as not guilty, and if his *Prince* forgave him, no one might dare to punish him. Believing the tidings of his free forgiveness, joy would take the place of sorrow in his heart. A grateful sense of his deliverer's mercy would pervade his mind. A new impulse might be given to his moral feelings, and this once lost and guilty criminal might become an honourable and a useful member of society—and *that*, observe, *not* through any worthiness in himself,—for in himself there was all that was obnoxious to justice;—but, merely through the clemency of his Prince and the voluntary interference of his friend. Apply this to the point we are discussing: We need not *suppose* ourselves criminals; we *really* are so. We have transgressed the law; our transgression of it is sin;

[i] Isa. lxiv, 6.

sin is rebellion against the mind and will of Heaven's Eternal Majesty, and a sentence of guiltiness *hath* been passed upon us.[k] Our own conscience acknowledges the justness of it: We are "tied and bound by the chain of our sin:" the gloomy horrors of an infernal jail may justly be assigned to us: to die eternally we justly merit:—but, we have a Friend—a Friend merciful and gracious, a Son dear and only beloved: He stays the uplifted arm of vengeance, intercedes with his Father for us, averts our doom, and God, for his Son's sake, pardons our sins and saves our souls. "To us is the word of this salvation sent:"[l] We believe the joyful tidings, and now we poor "rebels," we poor "dust and ashes," we poor "worms," are freely forgiven all our numerous sins, and treated as if we had not sinned at all. Marvellous mercy this! And is there aught in us to merit it? O no: it is to "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" that we must trace it. *His* is the righteousness which makes us righteous. And feel we under no obligation to Him? Being "saved from wrath through Him," feel we no sense of gratitude kindling with sacred energy within us, and constraining us to live for him who died for us? "Justified" and saved, shall we not glorify the Saviour-God who justifies and saves us? Thus may we come out of our "prison-house," rejoice in the free forgiving love of our Almighty and Eternal Lord, serve him in newness of life below, and anticipate, with "assurance of hope," the being "presented faultless before the presence of his glory" above.

Having said what justification is, I come to say

II. *How a man* CANNOT *be justified*—

(And this I wish particularly to be observed; because it is a fact too sure to be denied that many amongst us are either *justified*, as they think, or *expect-*

[k] Gal. iii, 10. [l] Acts xiii, 26.

ing to be justified, in a way the most unscriptural and delusive.)

How a man *cannot* be justified, has already partially appeared from our foregoing remarks: but I mean more particularly to say how he cannot.

And, first, I say, a man cannot be justified by *repentance*. The criminal whom we supposed just now, might be very sorry for his crime; but his sorrow for it could not expiate its guilt. In like manner, we may feel grieved for our sins; but our grief can make no satisfaction for them. Could we shed rivers of tears, our tears would possess no virtue in them to wash away a single sin. Judas, from a conviction of sinfulness, "repented," and even "confessed" his sin: but neither his repentance nor confession availed him any thing. And doubtless, too, the fallen Angels, and those of mankind who have unhappily become their associates since they fell, bitterly lament their respective sins; but their "lamentation and mourning and woe" come to no end. Now, ask many how they expect to be justified with God? and the answer you will commonly receive will be—"By true repentance." So vague and unsatisfactory are the notions of the generality on the all important topic of justification! And what, on enquiry, is the 'true repentance' whereby many think to get their sins forgiven and themselves saved? It is a repentance that has *no truth* in it. It is declared to be false and defective by a willing continuance in sin, and a determined enmity to godliness. It is the *consequence* of sin rather than *sin* itself which people dread: they *dread* the consequence, but they *love* the sin. All such repentance is vain—utterly vain and worthless. But even the repentance that *is* true, and whose fruits evidence its truth, has nothing at all to do with the matter of our justification in the sight of God. Deep and hearty soever as our penitence may be, there is no merit in it. It cannot, therefore, justify us. It may indeed be a preparation of the

mind for the benefits of justification: it is not justification itself.

Again: A man cannot be justified by *amendment of life*. To true repentance, many add, amendment of life: '*we must mend our lives to be sure; we must atone for former faults.*' In transactions of a worldly kind, payment for a present purchase will not liquidate an old debt. So with our sins: no present obedience can make amends for past transgression. If we could, from this moment, keep the whole Law, and never break even one of the least of God's commands again, there would remain our former sins against us. As to *our* making any atonement for them, where is the possibility of our doing so? What have we, worthy the Divine acceptance, to offer? If "*without shedding of blood*, there is no remission,"[m] where is our Sacrifice? If our amended life will justify us, whence shall we derive our ability to amend it? how change the current of our affections and propensities? how do that which is really and spiritually good? If it be said, from God: true; we answer: but, in receiving aught from him, why should we boast as if we had not received it?[n] Still it will remain true—"By *the deeds of the Law* shall no flesh be justified."[o] They may evidence a justified state: but they do not, however pure in motive and disinterested in performance, justify us with God.

Further: A man cannot be justified by his *sincerity*. Many will say to us—'*We do offend: how can we help it? we are frail and sinful creatures: nevertheless, we are very sincere: we mean no harm; our heart is good.*' This is all delusion: it is the reasoning of a heart "deceitful above all things." "Holy *Scripture* doth set out unto us ONLY the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved."[p] There are, we know, some heathens who worship the Devil, and, no doubt, are very sincere in the

[m] Heb. ix. 22. [n] 1 Cor. iv. 7. [o] Rom. iii. 20.
[p] Art. xvi.

worship which they render him: And there are, again, others who worship—some the Virgin Mary,—some their personal charms,—some their wealth,—some the phantom pleasures of a phantom world,—and all, we may believe, very sincerely too: but the sincerity of ignorance avails nothing to salvation. Do we not, however, it may be asked, read much of integrity and uprightness in the Bible? Are not Abimelech, Job, and David, particularly commended for their integrity?[q] Yes, but God must create the heart anew, ere it can be true.[r] And even when created anew, its sincerity only evidences its new creation, it does not justify the soul. However sincere, our obedience will always be imperfect here. "Weighed in the balances we shall be found wanting;"[s] and no imperfect righteousness—no obedience that falls an iota short of absolute perfection, will justify us with an infinitely holy and heart-searching God.

Finally, a man cannot be justified by *any works whatever of his own.* '*We must do all we can, and as well as we can,*' is an expression in almost every body's mouth. Now our Lord says, "*When ye shall have done* ALL *those things which are commanded you, say ye, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.*"[t] And surely "*un*profitable servants" can have no *claim* to reward or favour. Besides, who does *all* he *can* do? Do you? What! do you pray as much as you can? meditate as much as you can? hear or read God's Word as much as you can? attend your public means as much as you can?—I believe there is not one of us all but could do much more than he does, if he were so disposed. Methinks we should rather beseech God to 'pardon our offences' than to 'weigh our merits.' Do what they may, people will find their own works "a bed shorter than that a man can stretch himself upon it, and a covering

[q] Gen. xx. 5, 6; Job. ii. 3; Ps. 78,72.
[r] Ps. 51, 10. [s] Dan. v. 27. [t] Luke xvii 10.

narrower than that he can wrap himself in it."[v] When Peter seemed to encourage a partial dependence, at least, on personal duties, Paul reproved him.[w] Peter tacitly acknowledges his error by his silence, and does not hesitate at a subsequent period to call Paul a "beloved brother."[x] Any thing whatever that affords a ground of hope to a sinner beside the one foundation that is laid in Zion is "*another* foundation" and "OTHER foundation CAN no man lay, than that which is laid."[y] As to doing all, and as well as we can, and supposing the merits of Christ will make up our deficiency, it is perfectly absurd, and contradictory to the whole tenor of Scripture.[z] This we shall presently more evidently perceive. Suffice it now to repeat, a man CANNOT be justified by *repentance;* by *amendment of life;* by *sincerity;* nor by *any works whatever of his own.*

This prepares our way to say

III. *How alone he* CAN *be justified?*

And how? I cannot tell you in plainer or more significant language than that of our own Church—"We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for own works or deservings."[a] Let us mark these words; they contain, as we believe, the very marrow of the Gospel. "*We are* ACCOUNTED *righteous before God* ONLY *for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and* NOT *for our own works or deservings.*" Well indeed may our forefathers add, "Wherefore, that we are justified *by faith* ONLY *is a most wholesome doctrine* and *very full of comfort,*"—for here truly is that "feast of fat things" which a poor self-condemned sinner feels to be delightfully suited to his soul's necessities.[b] But, *are*

[v] Isaiah, xxviii. 20. [w] Gal. ii. 11—16. [x] ii. Pet. iii. 15.
[y] i. Cor. iii. 11. [z] Rom. ix. 32; Gal. v. 2—4.
[a] Art. xi. [b] Isa. xxv. 6.

these things so? *Can* a man be justified with God by faith only through another's righteousness? That your faith may stand—not in the word of man, but in the Word of God, turn with me first to Genesis xv, 6. Here we read, "Abraham believed in the Lord, and the Lord counted it to him for righteousness." The Lord promised Abraham "a Seed, in whom himself and all the families of the earth should be blessed:" That Seed was Christ:[c] and by faith in him (for our Lord tells us Abraham saw his day, and rejoiced to see it,[d]) was Abraham accounted righteous or justified. True, James asks,[e] "Was not Abraham, our father, justified *by works?*" Yes, before *men;* when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar at Moriah, his faith was evidenced to be genuine and sincere, and before men he was manifestly a justified person. But the faith for which the Scriptures so justly celebrate Abraham was *that* he exercised twenty years before the birth of Isaac, and which faith had for its exalted object the promised Seed, and which Seed James himself says, was "imputed to him for righteousness."* A living faith, as in Abraham's case, will evidence its existence. It is impossible but it will do so: it is the germ of holiness; the principle of action Love begets love: affection mingled with gracious condescension, kindles a reciprocal affection. When our faith realizes to our understanding and judgment, a *Saviour* and a Saviour's sacrifice of himself for the guilty and condemned, what Isaac is there we would not sacrifice in return to him? Shall we think *ourselves*—"our souls and bodies," too much to be presented to a *Saviour?*[f] Oh! no: "all things will be

* The reader may peruse at leisure Romans iv. It is an *inspired* commentary on Genesis xv.

[c] Gal. iii, 16. [d] John viii, 56. [e] Ch. ii, 21.
[f] Rom. xii, 1.

possible to him that believeth." A liberated captive will not sigh for his prison again. A ransomed slave will never voluntarily bind himself to the oar of slavery again. A sense of mercy will never make sin a trifle, and induce a wish to sin that grace may abound. No, no: "we have not *so* learned Christ." Justification by faith alone is "a doctrine according to godliness." Our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, and it is *only* by the comfort of God's grace we can mercifully be relieved.[g] And that grace, bestowed where and on whom soever it will, invariably teaches us to "deny ungodliness, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly." Turn with me, too, to Job. xxxiii, 15—30. Elihu speaks of a "Messenger, an Interpreter, a Daysman," through whose uprightness the Lord will be gracious to a sinner, and deliver him from going down to the pit. Who sees not here "the Messenger of the Covenant,"[h] the Revealer of the Father's mind and will?[i] "I have found a ransom—an atonement," saith the Lord: and for whose justification or salvation does this avail but the believer's? and what can give us an interest in it but faith only? Much in the same manner does Daniel speak,[k] when he declares "Messiah shall be cut off, but *not for himself*." By Jesus is a "reconciliation made for iniquity, and an everlasting righteousness is brought in." And now this is, as an unspotted robe, "unto all and upon all them that *believe*."[l] Hence in Isaiah lxi, 10, the believer is represented as saying, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God:"—and why this rapturous exultation?"—For, *He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness,* as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth

[g] Col. for iv. Sunday in Lent.
[h] Mal. iii, 1.
[i] John xv, 15.
[k] Ch. ix, 24.
[l] Rom. iii, 22.

herself with her jewels." And whose is this righteousness? for, we observe, it is "THE righteousness," preeminently and exclusively "*the* righteousness," whereby a sinner can be justified and shall glory. Paul will tell us: turn to Rom. iii, 19—22. In verse 19, all the world of mankind is declared to be guilty, or subject to the punishment of God. "*Therefore*," it follows in verse 20, "by the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight: for by the Law is the knowledge of sin: (and how can that justify us, which makes known to us our sinfulness?) But now (verse 21) the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law (or books of Moses,) and the prophets; even (verse 22) the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ," and this, as we have before intimated, is "unto all and upon all them that believe." Hence it appears, the righteousness in which the believer triumphs is "*the righteousness of God*," that is, of Christ; (for "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself:") and the means whereby he is interested in the finished work of his Redeemer is *faith*, faith *alone*, faith *without the deeds of the Law*, faith without our *own* works or deservings. And this, we have seen, is witnessed by the Law of Moses, and the writings of the Prophets, to which we may with propriety add the writings also of the Apostles. "SURELY, then, shall one say, "IN THE LORD *have I righteousness and strength;*" yea, "IN THE LORD *shall all the Seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.*"[m] "IN THE LORD shall we be saved with an everlasting salvation," and "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

I think, then, that our Church is abundantly warranted to inculcate the doctrine of Justification by faith alone in the merit of Jesus Christ on her Ministers, and, through them, on her members: nor can we

[m] Isa. xlv, 24, 25.

teach any other method of Justification without wresting the Scriptures and invalidating our trust.

But, why, it may be asked, Why does faith alone, faith without works, justify us? Because faith is the only medium by which we can receive Christ. It is, as it were, the hand which "puts on Christ,"[n] and which uses him as the Prophet, the Priest, the King, the All of his believing people. Did the Law require a perfect unsinning obedience? Jesus has magnified its every precept and honoured its every requirement.[o] Was the blood of "a Lamb without blemish and without spot" needed to expiate the guilt of our transgressions?"[p] Behold that Lamb in Jesus: he was "holy, harmless, undefiled," and freely did his blood flow forth in Gethsemane, in the Hall of Pilate, and on Mount Calvary. We, receiving cordially and believing practically, "the record God hath given of his Son, are justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the Law." Received and believed,[q] the atonement of our dying Lord, heals the diseases of our sinful souls, cheers our sorrowing hearts, and constrains us to "do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God."

Whilst, then, a Man *cannot* be justified by his repentance, by any amendment of his outward conduct, by a sincere though imperfect obedience to the Law, or by any works whatever of his own—he CAN be justified by faith only, by faith simply, in the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It remains only for me to say

IV. WHY *he can be justified in no other way than the way in which he is justified.*

There are many reasons why he cannot: We shall briefly notice a few.

[n] Rom. xiii, 14. [o] Isa. xlii, 21. [p] Exod. xii, 1, 14
[q] Rom. v, 1.

I. *It is God's determination that "no flesh shall glory in his sight."*[r] "All flesh hath corrupted His way:"[s] His Law we have daringly trampled on—his Word we have impiously cast behind us. And yet in the pride and arrogance of our heart we would, if it were possible, merit our salvation, and have "whereof to glory" before God. This pride God is determined to humble. He therefore bestows a gratuitous, a free, Salvation. "Before honour is humility."[t] The Gospel knows "no difference" between one person and another whilst in a natural state: it makes "no difference" between the justification of a moral man and of an *im*moral man: it humbles all before it exalts any; nor does it allow even an Abraham or a Paul to say,—'This or that part of my Salvation I myself effected: the glory of it, consequently, belongs to me.' No: if it be asked, "Where is boasting, then?" The answer is, "It is excluded."[v] A man cannot, therefore, be justified in any other way than the way in which he is justified.

2.—*God has determined that his* SON ALONE *shall be glorified in the justification of a sinner.* Not only must "the loftiness of man be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man be made low," but "the *Lord alone* must be exalted."[w] "All men must honour the Son *even as* they honour the Father;"[x] and again it is written, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."[y] Now, if our righteousness, in the smallest imaginable measure, justified us with God, our Saviour alone and exclusively could not be exalted in our justification. "Works of righteousness which we have done," and *not* "the mercy of God through Jesus Christ" would save us—contradicting the very declaration of Scrip-

[r] 1 Cor. i, 27, 29.
[s] Gen. vi, 12.
[t] Prov. xv, 33.
[v] Rom. iii, 27.
[w] Isa. ii, 17.
[x] 1 Cor. i, 31.
[y] Jer. ix, 24.

ture itself.[z] God "hath given Christ for salvation to the ends of the earth:" He is *all* our salvation; and therefore must alone be exalted. This is another reason why a man can be justified in no other way than the way in which he is justified.

3.—*It is, too, God's determination to "magnify his name and his Word above" all the "philosophy, vain deceit, tradition of men, and rudiments of the world."* "A council of peace" was held between him and his beloved Son.[a] We are "saved and called not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which were given us in Christ before the world began."[b] "My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure," saith the Lord.[c] Now, "if righteousness come by the Law," and we be justified by our works, the purpose and grace of God will be frustrated, His counsel will be made void, and all His pleasure will fail of its accomplishment. The Word of God, like its all-glorious Author, is "without variableness." It is the enduring rock,—not the yielding sand. It is itself the system of all pure Divinity. It bows not to the reason or authority of man: its decisions are unalterable, and when it says, "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that, not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,"[d]—it affords another and a powerful reason why a man can be justified in no other way than the way in which he is justified.

But 4, and finally,—*It is a merciful God's most gracious determination to afford grounds of the most abundant consolation to the humbled and believing sinner.* If we were justified on the grounds of our own deserving, we should be continually and fearfully apprehensive of our acceptance and safety. We should never be able to ascertain *what* merit or *how much*, of ours would suffice to justify us: we should therefore

[z] Tit. iii, 5. [a] Zech. vi, 13. [b] 2 Tim. i, 9. [c] Isa. xlvi, 10. [d] Eph. ii, 8.

be miserably uncertain about the matter of our justification with God. Whereas in "the righteousness of faith" there is illimitable worth—an infinite sufficiency of merit. Grounding, then, our hope of mercy simply and entirely on Jesus crucified, "our consolations by Him abound."[e] "We glory even in tribulations for His sake."[f] "We take pleasure, for His sake, in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses."[g] "Our hope standeth sure."[h] A sweet persuasion grows within us that nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ.[i] A peace that passeth understanding keeps our heart and mind. The service of the slave is lost in that of the child. The Law fulfils its office as "our schoolmaster"—teaches us our need of Christ; and "being justified by faith," we learn to "esteem *all* God's commandments concerning all things to be right;"—his ways become to us "ways of pleasantness,"—and it is the very joy of our hearts to feel that a man can be justified in no other way than the way in which he is justified.

I have now said, what Justification is; how a man cannot be justified; how alone he can be justified; and why he can be justified in no other way than the way in which he is justified: In conclusion, I would only ASK,

Doth this offend you? What! doth it offend you to be stripped of the fig-leaf aprons or the "filthy rags" of your own righteousness, and to be clothed with the garment of Salvation? Oh! yes: I know full well the doctrine of Justification by faith alone is offensive to the proud carnality of the human mind. It is contrary to all the propensities of our fallen nature to "*cease* from going about to establish our *own* righteousness, and to *submit* ourselves to the righteousness of *God*." We would fain *be* something, *do* something,

[e] 2 Cor. i, 5. [f] Rom. v, 3. [g] 2 Cor xii, 10.
[h] Heb. vi, 19. [i] Rom. viii. 39.

deserve something. Earthly good we would rather obtain by gift than purchase: spiritual good we would rather buy than receive gratuitously. But "*without* money and *without* price" must we receive "the riches of grace" if ever we would be enriched with them. "Righteousness" is a *gift* to be received from God through Jesus Christ. So also is the "eternal life" to which it entitles the receiver.[k] Never shall we be justified with God but in the way of his own appointment. Condescend, therefore, you must, to accept the righteousness of your Redeemer, and to make 'his meritorious cross and passion' the all of your dependence, or never be justified at all. And should you do otherwise than readily accept what God so freely offers? Your rejection of his proffered mercy will but aggravate your guilt. Moral soever as you may be, your morality will not save you. Can *you* pretend to be holier, wiser, or better than Abel, Abraham, Jacob, Samuel, David, Paul, and innumerable others whose names are in the Book of Life? And yet these were all justified by faith in Jesus Christ.[l] And to whom are they now ascribing their Salvation?—to *themselves?*—Look and see Rev. v. 12, 14. Let us, then, be agreed to "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God:" Let us pray him to "search our hearts" and to discover them to us: Let us say with Job, "*I am vile;*" and cherish a feeling of self-abhorrence: then will it rejoice us to hear that our "Redeemer liveth;" in him alone shall we glory; his righteousness alone shall we make mention of, and when with all the redeemed of the earth we shout the "Alleluia" of the Heavenly world, it will be our everlasting and never wearying delight to sing—"Unto *Him* that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

[k] Rom. v. 17, vi. 23. [l] Heb. xi.

DISCOURSE IV.

WELL WITH THE RIGHTEOUS: ILL WITH THE WICKED.

Isaiah iii. 10. 11.

Say ye to the Righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings: Woe unto the Wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.

"Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."[a] Plainly do we see this exemplified in the history of God's once favoured people, the Jews. "Haughty" and arrogant in *heart*, we cannot wonder that "their *tongue* and their *doings* were against the Lord." In just displeasure took he away "from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread and the whole stay of water." Sin occasioned the ruin of Jerusalem and the fall of Judah. Amidst, however, the general apostacy of the nation, some there were who feared the Lord and thought upon his name. And ever is it found that "the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, and his ear open unto their cry." Whilst, then, He commissions his servant to declare "a woe unto the

[a] Prov. xiv, 34.

Wicked," he commands him to say unto the Righteous, "it shall be well with him." And since in our days, no less than in the days of Isaiah, the world of mankind is divisible only into two classes, viz. "the Righteous" and "the Wicked," the Minister of the Christian Zion may believe himself fully authorized to tell the one, "it shall be well with him," and to say, "Woe to the Wicked, for it shall be ill with him."

I purpose to notice

I. The Reward of the Righteous:
And II. The Woe of the Wicked.

In noticing
I. *The Reward of the Righteous,*

We must, ere we notice their reward, inquire *who the Righteous are.* The Bible elsewhere tells us, "There is *none* Righteous, no, *not one.*"[b] All our powers and faculties are represented as disordered and depraved: the *throat* is an open sepulchre; the *tongue* is deceitful; asps' poison is under the *lips;* the *mouth* is full of cursing and bitterness; the *feet* are swift to shed blood; the *eyes* have not the fear of God before them; the *mind* is alienated from him; the *will* is not subject to his Law; the *understanding* is darkened; and—in few words, "The *whole* head is sick, and the *whole* heart is faint," and "there is, from the sole of the foot even unto the head, no soundness in us."[c] Even the Apostles themselves were not exempt from this general corruption of nature. Paul, be it observed, in Eph. ii. 3 calls himself and his fellow-labourers in the Gospel "by *nature,* children of wrath, even as others." Now, then, what makes the difference between some and others? A difference there is: both Scripture and observation prove it. But, whence does it arise? How are any righteous? see

[b] Rom. iii, 10. [c] Isa. i, 5, 6.

in the chapter we have just referred to:—mark its every part; and you will see that any change whatever that is wrought in us, and whereby we differ from others, is to be traced to "the great love wherewith God hath loved us." "Quickened" from a death in sin, brought up from the grave of natural corruption,[d] the new-born man will look to Jesus Christ for all his salvation. Unto 'such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things,' (I use here the language of our Church, Art. xvii.) "Christ is made of God—*righteousness*."[e] He is "the *Second* Adam:"[f] and in what respect is he so? Why, as all men were represented in the first, and consequently fell in his fall, and became liable to all the effects of his transgression; so are all believers represented in the Lord Jesus Christ, the *Second* Adam, and consequently are and will be interested in all the benefits of his obedience and death. After the Holy Spirit, by his effectual operation on the mind, has convinced any man of sin, humbled his heart, and won his soul to Christ, that man is "accounted righteous"—"righteousness is imputed to him also," as it was to faithful Abraham.[g] And "as a refiner's fire" will the Holy Spirit gradually refine, exalt, and purify all those powers and faculties of the now justified sinner that were once prostituted to the debasing service of the flesh, the world, and Satan. This is that "translation from the power of darkness into the kingdom (the *gracious* kingdom) of God's dear Son,"[h] which, whosoever may be the subject of it, we may with scriptural propriety denominate—"the *Righteous* man."

And now we are prepared to notice his *Reward*. "Say ye to the Righteous, *it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings*." Faith in the

[d] See Ezek. xxxvii, 12. [e] 1 Cor. i, 30. [f] 1 Cor. xv, 47.
[g] Rom. iv, 23, 24. [h] Col. i, 13

Gospel, and a conversation according to the Gospel's pure and hallowing doctrines, does insure most certainly a reward to the Righteous. We cannot, indeed, imagine that an infinitely glorious Creator can ever be indebted to a creature, or obligated to reward a creature's faith and service: nevertheless, there is a "reward of *grace*," though not "of debt." God 'favourably alloweth,' mercifully accepts, and will graciously reward the works of his own Spirit in us. "His reward is with Him,"[h] wheresoever or to whomsoever he comes. "*In* keeping his commands there is a great reward."[i] There is a satisfaction, a peace, a joy, in the ways of the Lord, unspeakably precious and delightful. "*Verily there* IS *a reward for the righteous:*"[k] "*It shall be* WELL *with him;*"—and *well* with him *in life,—in death,*—and *in eternity.*

It shall be well with him *in life.* Is he young? Is he another Samuel, Josiah, or Timothy? Is he another child crying in the Temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David?" He shall, in the Spirit of adoption, and through a Saviour's mediation, cry unto the sovereign and eternal God—"*My Father, thou art the guide of my youth.*"[l] Is he engaged in the necessary cares and businesses of the world? He shall be "kept in the hour of temptation" that shall try the stability of others, and "prove every man's work of what sort it is." Is he "small and of no reputation?" Angels shall minister unto him. Is he poor? "God hath chosen the poor of this world:" riches of faith below and riches of glory in reversion far outweigh in excellence and value every earthly good whatever. Is he 'in sorrow, need, pain, sickness, or any other adversity?' "The high and lofty One" will "make for him all his bed in his sickness;" bow down a listening ear to "the sorrowful sighing" of his servant; "be with him in trouble," and ultimately "wipe away

[h] Isa. xl, 10. [i] Ps. 19, 11. [k] Ps. 58, 11. [l] Jer. iii, 4.

all tears from his eyes." Is *he*, as was his holy Lord, "despised and rejected of men?" Is his "good conversation in Christ" falsely accused? Do the wicked deem him—his name, his character, and that on account of his piety—their lawful "prey?"[m] "The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon him:" the sufferer's cross becomes to him a pledge of the conqueror's crown."[n] Is he aged? Does he tremble beneath the weight of numerous years? "Even to hoar hairs will I carry you" saith the Lord: and "the hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness."[o] In *life*, and in all life's various periods, circumstances, weaknesses, and ills, the righteous man shall prove that "godliness is profitable to all things," and "hath hope of *the life that* NOW IS" no less certainly than "of *that* which is to come."[p]

It shall be well with him also *in Death*. That which to Nature is commonly terrible and affrighting, is to the regenerate man—if not *always* desirable, at least, *often* so, and *never* otherwise than safe and happy. "It is gain to die."[q] "To depart and to be with Christ, is far better" than to sojourn where we can only gaze upon a Saviour's glory through darkening mediums.[r] Brethren, come with me to the chamber of a dying Saint. All is sweetly solemn. Stillness prevails—or is broken only by ejaculatory prayer and whispered praise. Draw nigh the sick man's bed. What see we here? "The *Death* of the Righteous." Calmness, serenity, humble but triumphant hope, are depicted on the now colourless countenance. Hark, a softening breath declares,—"*It is well: all is well!*" See, the upraised eyes continue still to speak. They seem with beseeching earnestness to say—"Come Lord Jesus: Make haste, my Beloved; and be as the roe or the young hart upon the mountains of division!"

[m] Isa. lix, 15. [n] 2 Tim. ii, 12. [o] Prov. xvi, 31.
[p] 1 Tim. iv, 8. [q] Phil. i, 21. [r] Phil. i, 23.

Welcome death approaches: the scarcely beating pulse stands still: a momentary pause, and—"Death is swallowed up in victory." "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright: for *the end* of THAT man is peace."[s] Was it his *own* perfection or uprightness that thus sustained him? Oh! no: it was a consciousness of the Saviour's presence, an assured persuasion of his all-sufficiency, a firm belief in the finished work of redeeming Mercy, and a sincere desire that the Redeemer should be glorified "whether by life or by death." Thus even "*in the Earth* is the Righteous recompensed," and truly "hath he *hope* in his Death."[t] And shall his hope perish with his earthly being? No: for,

It shall be well with him *in Eternity:* and *how* well it shall be with the righteous man in eternity, "eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath heart of man (amidst the millions of its conceivings) conceived."[v] One indeed was once "caught up into the third Heaven;"[w] but he found what he had heard and seen there to be unutterable in the language of mortality. Who, then, of us may dare attempt to describe the glories of the eternal world? O ye Intelligences, ye Angels, ye Spirits of the Dust made perfect, what are your wondrous joys, your extatic pleasures, your unwearying occupations? Beloved, we must die to know them. Suffice it for us now to know that the blessedness of a soul justified by faith and saved by grace, will be commensurate—not with its *own,* but—with the Redeemer's worthiness, and with those capacities to receive and to enjoy which the Spirit of Christ hath wakened, exercised, renewed, and purified. With a mind previously 'drawn up to high and heavenly things'—with "senses" previously exercised to discern both good and evil,"[x] the righteous man will be prepared for the kingdom prepared for him, and therein shall "be filled with all the fulness of God." What

[s] Ps. 37, 37. [t] Prov. xi, 31, xiv, 32. [v] 1 Cor. ii, 9.
[w] 2 Cor. xii, 4. [x] Heb. v, 14.

though he was "cut down as the grass and faded as a flower of the field?" It was only to be transplanted to a kindlier clime and to bloom more beauteously in Paradise. What though he was taken away amidst the smiles and caresses of many who loved him? He merely lost those smiles for others that will beam with everlasting brightness on him. It was well with him here; it is better with him now. Now he truly "eats the fruits of his doings,"—and these fruits are neither few nor small. Whatever he did from a principle of faith and love, God will in no wise forget to acknowledge and reward.[a] He worked the work, without which all other works are vain.[b] He sowed to the Spirit, and now "of the Spirit he reaps life everlasting." He "sorrowed after a godly sort;" "believed with the heart unto righteousness:" and "brought forth fruit with patience." It is now, therefore, WELL with him, and shall be well with him *for ever*.

Such is the Reward of the Righteous. We come to notice

II. *The Woe of the Wicked.*

And, as before we enquired—Who were the righteous? so here we must enquire, Who are the wicked? But is this enquiry at all necessary? Yes, and not *less* necessary, we believe, than it was to enquire concerning its opposite character. For though, in a general way, people allow themselves to be sinners, yet even whilst allowing it, there is evidently no consciousness of sin, no apprehension of its adequate desert, no sorrow for it, no hatred to it, no concern to know how, consistently with the attributes of a God "glorious in holiness," sin may be pardoned and remitted. 'We are all sinners,' is the acknowledgment of the lips: but, 'we are not so bad as others,' is the secret sentiment of the heart. If, however, none but practical

[a] Heb. vi, 10. [b] John vi, 28, 29.

believers of "the truth as it is in Jesus" are either accounted righteous or are really so, it follows necessarily that all but them must be wicked. Let not our plainness of speech be condemned. We mean to prove what we assert. Our Church says, "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, *by his* OWN *natural strength or good works,* to faith and calling upon God."[c] And again, 'Works done *before* the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasing to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ; *and we doubt not but they have the nature of sin:*'[d] And further, 'Good works are *the* FRUITS *of faith, and* FOLLOW AFTER *justification:*' and 'though they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment, yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and *do spring out* NECESSARILY *of a true and living faith,* &c.'[e] IF SO (and shall we gainsay our own accredited formularies?) *if so,* what becomes of the so much talked of 'Dignity of Human Nature, the rationality and moral excellence of man?' *No* man by any power or ability in himself can turn himself to God: *No* works done *before* the grace and spirit of the Redeemer are imparted, are pleasing to God: Any thing that makes us to differ either from our former selves, or the generality of our fellow-sinners, is the *fruit* of faith, and *subsequent* to our justification: Then it follows, as a natural consequence, that where the grace and Spirit of Christ are wanting—where there is no justifying faith and corresponding works, there is the character of the Wicked. But, will the *Bible* warrant our conclusion? Saith the *Scripture* this? For however we may venerate the formularies of our Church, the *Word of God* must be the paramount standard of our orthodoxy, and the rule of our decision. Now, in that Word I find it

[c] Art. x, [d] Art. xiii. [e] Art. xii.

written, "*Without* ME *ye can do nothing?*"[c] What, then, are those who pretend to do any thing or every thing without Christ? Will *the righteous* despise and reject him? Will *they* cry "Away with him," and refuse to be obligated to his merit *alone* for salvation? I find it said, moreover, "*Without* FAITH *it is impossible to please God.*"[d] "All men have not faith:" those who are destitute of it cannot please God: must they not, therefore, *displease* Him; and are not those who displease God, *the wicked?* Again I read, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ."[e] Is it not here *implied* that as surely as there is "*no* condemnation to them that are in Christ," there IS condemnation to them that are *not* in him? And who are they that are not in him? Them that "walk after the flesh" and "not after the spirit,"—in other words,—*the wicked.*—And on whom is that "woe" pronounced we find recorded in Luke xi. 37—44? On persons who appeared "beautiful outwardly." "Their works they did to be seen of men:" they went "about to establish their *own* righteousness:" their heart was void of grace, faith, truth, and love; and therefore He who knew what was in man, pronounced a "woe unto" them. Would Jesus Christ say, 'Woe unto you, ye *Righteous?*' But, finally,—as if to prevent the possibility of mistake relative to the character of the wicked, we read, in Ps. 9, 17, "*The wicked shall be turned into Hell,*" and who they are the same Scripture declares,—a "*people that forget God.*" How common is forgetfulness of God! How willingly do many forget Him! Amidst the multitude of their thoughts, God is not among them all—or if thought on, is thought on only as an object of terror and aversion. Does not this argue a heart "deceitful above all things and *desperately* WICKED?" And may not a minister of Religion most truly aver that a man

[c] John xv, 5. [d] Heb. xi, 6. [e] Rom. viii, 1.

may be sober, quiet, industrious; may (as it is almost universally said) pay all their due; say his prayers; keep his church, and be, in worldly estimation, a good sort of person; and *yet*, YET, in the judgment of God, and by the decision of the Bible, be a *wicked* man? Judge ye, Beloved. Let us learn to distinguish between things. Be it remembered that a man may be *comparatively* and even *morally* good, without being *really* and *spiritually* so.

Having ascertained who *the wicked* are, we come to notice now their *Woe*. "*Woe to the Wicked: it shall be ill with him, and the reward of his hands shall be given him.*" Here the woe of the wicked is called their "reward;" and a reward it is: for while "eternal life" is bestowed as a "gift through Jesus Christ" upon the Righteous, the "woe" of the Wicked is paid to them as "wages" earned.[f] "I will reward them that hate me," saith the Lord.[g] And again, "I will reward them their doings."[h] Truly, then, may we say, the self-complacent, the lover of human praise, the mere negatively good but really wicked man, hath his reward. (See Matt. vi, 2, 5, 16.) But, ah! how all-unlike is it to the Reward of the Righteous! "Say ye to the Righteous it shall be well with him: *Woe to the Wicked*, it shall be *ill* with him!" And as with the one it will be well in life, in death, and in eternity, so with the other it shall be ill *in life, in death, and for ever*.

It shall be ill with the Wicked *in life*. The Wicked may, as the Scripture says, "bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, *though* I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst;" but "the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this Book shall lie upon him."[i] Others may lull his slumbers in the security that deceives him, "say-

[f] Rom. vi, 23. [g] Deut. xxxii, 41. [h] Hos. iv, 9.
[i] Deut. xxix, 19, 21.

ing, Peace, Peace, when there is no peace."[k] He may tell you of the goodness of his heart, and point you to the World's universal approval of his conduct: but he forgets the "woe" annexed to "*all* men's speaking well of us."[l] Riches, honours, pleasures, the wicked man may possess: his path-way to human view may seem strewed with enjoyments: smiles on every side may greet him; the joys and the sorrows of a multitude be dependent on his notice or neglect, and yet "in the fulness of his sufficiency, he shall be in the straits:"[m] a worm shall gnaw the root of his gourd, and the faithlessness of his heart in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be to him the withering blast of all his pleasures. Is he young? He has but the more time to "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath." Is he engaged in business? Is he prospered in it? Doth he begin to "pull down his barns" and to build other and larger storehouses for his "goods?" Still it is written, "Woe to him that gaineth an evil gain!"[n] "The wealth of the sinner" shall ultimately be found to be "laid up for the just."[o] Do distress and anguish come upon him? The world forsakes its votary in the hour of need. Does a sense of guiltiness sometimes harass him? He knows not the Gilead where a Saviour may be found, and that dying love whereby a sinner's sorrows may be healed.[p] Is he aged? No lengthened life of faith, no gracious riches, no spiritual honours has he attained. But, does he, in the proud ignorance of the carnal mind, 'pray (as many a one will say) to be delivered;' adding too, 'I have made my peace with God!' Awful delusion this! "There is NO *peace*, saith my God, to the Wicked"[q]—NO *peace*, save only through the meritorious Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ.[r] In fine, the *life* of the Wicked is one

[k] Jer. vi, 14. [l] Luke vi, 26. [m] Job. xx, 22.
[n] Hab. ii, 9. [o] Prov. xiii, 22. [p] Jer. viii, 22, Isa. liii, 5.
[q] Isa. lvii, 21. [r] EPh. ii, 12, 17.

"woeful day," nor is there a period of it, however marked either by prosperous or adverse circumstances, wherein it is not "ill" with him.

And shall it be otherwise in death? No: it shall be ill with the wicked *in death*. 'I am not afraid to die,' says many a wicked man: 'I wish you were,' is the mental answer of the pious Minister. The stupid insensibility of the unhumbled unawakened sinner, even Death itself can scarcely appal. The same self-conceitedness marks the expiring moments as marked the days of life and vigour. There is no prostration of the soul before the infinitely holy God. There is no submission to the righteousness of the all-glorious Redeemer. There is no "joy in the Holy Ghost," no transformation by his power from "glory into glory." No, none of these things characterize the dying of a sinner. Brethren, come and see. You went with me just now to the chamber of the dying saint; come with me now to the chamber of the dying sinner. This is indeed "the house of mourning." Unclose the darkened window: admit the light. Ah! it falls upon a soul beclouded with ignorance, unbelief, and sin. Approach the sick man's bed. 'Is it *well* with thee, brother?' 'I hope so.' 'Where rests your hope?' 'I do not know.' Shall we tell him 'He has done no harm, and been very good?' "Miserable comforters" should we be. But, see, the chills of death increase: the bridegroom cometh: the soul is required to meet him; and where, O where, is the wedding garment? Where, O where, is the robe wherein alone the soul can appear "faultless before the throne of God?" The groan of expiring nature ceases; motionless becomes the quivering lip—"Man giveth up the ghost and where is he?"* WHERE *is he? Here* lies the body, the fallen wreck of sin, and soon to return to its original again, but WHERE is he? *where*

* Job. xiv, 10

is the man's imperishable part? *where* the unrenewed and unforgiven soul?

"How shocking must thy summons be, O Death!
To him that is at ease in his possessions;
Who, counting on long years of pleasure here,
Is quite unfurnished for that world to come!—
In that dread moment, how the frantic soul
Raves round the walls of her clay tenement,
Runs to each avenue and shrieks for help,
But shrieks in vain. How wishfully she looks
On all she's leaving, now no longer her's!
A little longer, yet a little longer,
O might she stay to wash away her stains
And fit her for her passage. Mournful sight!
Her very eyes weep blood, and every groan
She heaves is big with horror: but the foe,
Like a staunch murd'rer, steady to his purpose,
Pursues her close thro' ev'ry lane of life,
Nor misses once the tract, but presses on;
Till, forc'd at length to the tremendous verge,
At once she sinks to everlasting ruin."

Yes, "to *everlasting* ruin;"* for while the righteous shall enter life eternal, the wicked shall go away into *everlasting* punishment.† And if such be the declaration of the supreme and unerring Judge of all, does it become me to hesitate, or shall I be thought uncharitable, in saying,

It shall be ill with the wicked *for ever?* With no title to life, he must inherit death. With no meetness for the inheritance of the saints, he must away to the inheritance of the wicked. If "their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched," he must

* Perhaps it is scarcely necessary to inform the reader that the lines quoted above are extracted from a very beautiful little Poem entitled, "The Grave," by Blair. Though no advocate for the use of Poetry in public discoures, yet on *one* occasion the Author was induced to repeat these lines, and *that* occasion he believes to be remembered by many: The lines, therefore, are here inserted.

† Matt. xxv, 46.

live for ever to endure their horrors. "There is no repentance in the grave;" there is no Saviour in Hell. Read the xvi. chapter of St. Luke. The rich man was, perhaps, in human view, what many an one is called now—'a good sort of man:' We do not read that he was a profane, unjust, or immoral man; but "he died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." Between him and the once despised but pious Lazarus "a great" and impassable "gulf was fixed." An unalterable and irreversible "CANNOT" fixes the one in glory and the other in misery:-- neither could pass to the other. The Popish notion of purgatory is no doctrine of the Bible. It is the lie of a "cunning craftiness;" nor can "the Man of Sin,' with all his pretended power, circumscribe the "*everlasting* punishment" of a wicked man by periods of a hundred, or a thousand, or ten thousand years. No: Heaven is, and will be, the everlasting abode of the righteous; Hell is, and will be, the everlasting dwelling-place of the wicked. It was bad with him here; it is worse with him there. And what though the wicked man lived respectably, and acted wisely, and laboured diligently, and fared sumptuously, and got him much of this world's honour and renown?—Where is he now? In eternity. And how fares he there? He is receiving "the reward of his hands." And what is that?—*Think* you what it is, and spare me the pain of *telling* you. "Woe" in all its tremendous verity is poured upon him. No righteousness of faith shields him from the sword of justice. No message of mercy can be despised now—no Saviour is "set forth" in hell—no Spirit strives with the rebellious there. There the "corruption" which springs from "sowing to the flesh" is reaped. "The reward" of a sinner's *own* hands is bestowed; his OWN hands, observe: for "GOD hath not appointed us to wrath,"[v] nor do

[v] 1 Thess. v, 9.

we read that the "fire unquenchable" was prepared for *man:*[w] No; if any man be "a vessel of wrath," he hath "fitted *himself* for destruction." (See the *Greek* of Rom. ix. 22.) It is "ill with him" simply on account of the native depravity and sinfulness of his own heart. "*God is love:*" He saves "*by grace through faith:*" *unbelief* in Jesus is the world's condemning sin: and however "exceedingly great" may be "the plague" of the wicked, they shall amidst all their blasphemies be constrained to acknowledge, "*Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, that thou hast judged thus:*" and the redeemed shall add, "*Even so, Lord God Almighty; true and righteous are thy judgments.*"[x]

Such, then, is both the Reward of the Righteous, and the Woe of the Wicked. It remains for me only to ADDRESS a few words,

I. To *the Righteous*.

You will perceive that I do not use the term "Righteous" as a mere complimentary appellation, or as if I thought it possible for any one to be perfect whilst sojourning in "a body of sin and death." No: "there is not a just (that is, a justified) man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not,"[y] and you yourselves, I am persuaded, would rather say the "God be merciful" of the publican, than the "God I thank thee" of the pharisee. But yet *as righteous* I address you, because "ye are perfect through the comeliness" which the Lord God hath put upon you.[z] Well, then, while your "*clothing* is of wrought gold," you should aspire to be "all-glorious *within*."[a] Christ is made of God unto us—*sanctification* no less than righteousness and redemption.[b] "Whom he justifies, them he also sanctifies."[c] Then seek the benefits of your justifica-

[w] Matt. xxv. 41. [x] Rev. xvi. 5, 7 21. [y] Eccl. vii. 15.
[z] Ezek. xvi. 14. [a] Ps. 45, 13. [b] 1 Cor. i. 30.
[c] Rom. viii. 30.

tion. See these benefits enumerated in Rom. v, 1—5. Pray ye that you may experience and enjoy them. If you love your Redeemer, "keep his sayings." Let your faith be seen in the nature, quality, and abundance of your works. Be it your delight to "sit still at the Master's feet." Learn "his *doctrine*," that you may "do his *will*." Pant after "the joy of faith."[c] The religion of many never gets beyond doubts and fears: seek *ye* its rewards, its comforts, its triumphs. When the inquiry is made, "Is it well with thee?" be prepared to answer as undauntedly as the Shunammite answered, "*It* is *well*."[d] Consider Christ, study Him, and be followers of Him with all the accuracy and exactness possible. So shall your "reward be great:" in life, in death, and in eternity, it shall be well with you: "joy and peace in believing" shall be your portion now, and the presence, the approval, and blessing, of your Redeemer, shall you inherit for ever hereafter.

2. To *the Wicked,*

I say, you need not be liars, swearers, sabbath-breakers, adulterers, and the like, to be wicked men. The world may have "no *evil* thing to say of you," and yet your *heart* may not be right with God. But, if you have no claim to the decencies of moral conduct, if you love sin and live in it, why, then may you most certainly conclude that it is ill with you. "A tree is known by its fruits," and if its fruits be corrupt, the tree must also itself be corrupt, and unless its nature can be changed, it will be found fit only for the fire. And is there no wish within you to be changed? Would you rather it should continue ill with you? There is a reality awful and unfathomable in the "woe" impending over you. "Why will ye die?" Here is a fountain for your uncleanness, a robe for your

[c] Phil. i. 25. [d] II. Kings iv. 26.

nakedness, a mercy-seat for your cries and prayers: "Why, then, will ye die?" Oh! "turn you at my reproof; so iniquity shall not be your ruin."[e] Nothing is too hard for the Lord. Take with you words and say, "Turn *thou* me, and I shall be turned."[f] Despair not. Of the once idolatrous, adulterous, covetous, Corinthians it was said, "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."[g] Still by "faith in this name," and "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," may other poor, guilty, and polluted sinners, be justified, sanctified, and saved. Then flee ye to "the hope" here set before you. Seek with your "form" the "*power* of godliness." Tremble at that word in Isaiah v, 21. "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own conceits!" It is ill with you whilst you are proud and self-sufficient. To Christ *every* knee must bow, and *every* tongue confess. Oh! that ye may become his "willing people" now in the day of His power: for says He that "lifteth up His hand to Heaven and saith, I live for ever, IF I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I *will* render vengeance to mine enemies and *will* reward them that hate me."[h]

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, the Rewarder of Righteousness, and the Avenger of Wickedness, be glory, dominion, praise, and power, for ever and ever. Amen.

[e] Ezek. xviii. 30. [f] Jer. xxxi. 18. [g] 1 Cor. vi. 9, 11.
[h] Deut. xxxii. 41.

DISCOURSE V.

AN APPEAL TO THE HOMILIES OF THE CHURCH.

1 Samuel xvi, 7.

The Lord seeth not as Man seeth: for Man looketh on the outward appearance; but the Lord looketh on the heart.

When the *really* orthodox Clergy of our Church discriminate between motive and action, heart and life, God's judgment of our character and Man's; it not unfrequently excites surprise and provokes disgust. We are thought to be "setters forth of *strange* doctrines"—doctrines new, peculiar, and unnecessary. We appeal almost in vain to the Scriptures for the truth of our declarations—them we are said to wrest. In vain also do we point to the renovated heart and conduct of our people, as evidencing the beneficial effect of our ministrations—our people are represented to be—I will not say what, but—*any thing* but what they should be. Now, in such a case, it is pleasing and consoling to have it in our power to refer the congregations committed to our charge to the acknowledged Writings of the Martyrs, Confessors, and Reformers of the Eng-

glish Church.* Truth suffers nothing by the lapse of ages: it is, like its Author, "yesterday, to-day, and for ever the same." If, therefore, our Latimer, Ridley, Cranmer, Hooker, and others, taught and preached the Truth as it is in Jesus, and our sentiments strictly accord with theirs, shall our doctrines be thought new, strange, peculiar, and unnecessary? Whether our sentiments so strictly accord with theirs as we avow them to do, you yourselves, my Brethren, shall be the judges. Referring you to the Homilies of our Church, I purpose from them, FIRST, *To gather a brief summary of Christian Doctrine; and,* SECONDLY, *To draw some obvious Inferences from it.*

I. In our *Summary of Christian Doctrine*—

We shall briefly state, in succession, the great and essential truths of Christianity, gathering as we proceed some corresponding statements from the Homilies.

And, first, we believe Man to be a totally depraved and sinful creature—*quam longissima,* as far as possible, gone from original righteousness.

"We have neither faith, charity, hope, patience, chastity, nor any thing else that good is, but of God: and, therefore, those virtues be called *the fruits of the Holy Ghost,* and not the fruits of Man. Let us then acknowledge ourselves before God (as indeed we be) miserable and wretched sinners." "In ourselves, as of ourselves, we find *nothing* whereby we may be delivered from our miserable captivity, into which we were cast, through the envy of the Devil, by breaking of God's commandment in our first parent Adam." Again, "of ourselves, and by ourselves, we are not able either to think a good thought or to work a good deed; so that we can find in ourselves *no* hope of Salvation, but

* The Author feels happy in recommending these excellent and invaluable Writings to his reader. Though, sometimes quaint in expression, they will well repay attentive and repeated perusals. They have ever constantly been read among the reading part of the Author's people.

rather whatsoever maketh to our destruction."[a] Can words say plainer that "Man's nature is wholly perverse and corrupt with sin?"

Consequent on this will be our *utter hopelessness and helplessness*. If "Israel hath destroyed himself," his hope and help must be found elsewhere than in himself.

"We are all become unclean, but we all are *not able* to cleanse ourselves, nor to make one another of us clean. We are all by nature the children of God's wrath; but we are *not able* to make ourselves the children and inheritors of God's glory. We are sheep that run astray: but we *cannot of our own power* come again to the sheep-fold,—so great is our imperfection and weakness." "In ourselves, therefore, may not we glory, which, of ourselves are *nothing* but sinful."[b]

Spiritual Influence, hence becomes absolutely necessary to regenerate the heart and to convert the soul.

"As there are three several and sundry Persons in the Deity; so have they three several and sundry offices proper unto each of them: the Father to create; the Son to redeem; *the Holy Ghost to sanctify and regenerate.*" "Where the Holy Ghost worketh, there nothing is impossible, as may appear by the inward regeneration and sanctification of Mankind." "The Holy Ghost is the worker of our sanctification, and maketh us new men in Christ Jesus."[c] "And in reading God's Holy Word, he not always most profiteth that is most ready in turning of the Book, or saying of it without the Book; but he that is most turned into it, that is most *inspired by the Holy Ghost*, most in his heart and life altered and changed by that thing which he readeth." "And in another place Chrysostom saith, that man's human and worldly wisdom or

[a] Homily on the misery of mankind. [b] Ibid.
[c] Homily for Whitsunday.

science is not needful to the understanding of Scripture, but *the revelation of the Holy Ghost,* who inspireth the true meaning unto them that with humility and diligence do search therefore."[d] Let these words be observed, and read in the recollection of the sneers of the heterodox at Spiritual Influences.

Man being a fallen helpless dependant creature, cannot, we affirm, *merit* any part whatever of his salvation. "Because all men be sinners and offenders against God, and breakers of his Law and Commandments, therefore can no man by his *own* acts, works, and deeds, (seem they *never* so good) be justified and made righteous before God." "Let us all confess with mouth and heart that we be full of imperfections: let us know our own works of what imperfection they be; and then we shall not stand foolishly and arrogantly in our own conceits, nor challenge *any* part of justification by our merits or works."[e] Our desert of nothing—but "*God's wrath and damnation,*" is universally apparent in the Homilies.

Man must, therefore, be justified and saved *gratuitously.* "Every man of necessity is constrained to seek for *another* righteousness or justification, to be received at God's own hands." "This justification or righteousness which we so receive of God's mercy and Christ's merits, *embraced by faith,* is taken, accepted, and allowed of God, for our perfect and full justification." God sent his Son to *fulfil the Law for us,* and, by shedding of his most precious blood, to make a sacrifice and satisfaction or (as it may be called) amends to his Father for our sins." "God is beneficial to us *without* our merits or deserts, of his *own mere mercy* and tender goodness, for Christ's sake." "Justification is not the office of man, but of God." "He provided a *ransom* for us, that was, the most pre-

[d] Exhortation to reading the SS. [e] Hom. on the misery of mankind.

cious body and blood of his own most dear and beloved Son, who, BESIDE *this ransom, fulfilled the Law for us perfectly.*" "And so the justice of God and his mercy did embrace together and fulfilled the mystery of our redemption."[f]

By faith alone are we interested in this redemption. "Three things go together in our justification: upon God's part mercy and grace; upon Christ's part justice, that is, the satisfaction of God's justice, or the price of our redemption, by the offering of his body and the shedding of his blood, *with* fulfilling of the Law perfectly and thoroughly; and upon *our part true and lively faith* in the merits of Jesus Christ, which yet is not ours, but by God's working in us." "A true and lively faith is the gift of God, and not man's only work without God." "Not that this our *faith* in Christ, which is within us, doth justify us, or deserve our justification unto us:" For "our faith in Chsist, as it were, saith unto us thus: It is not *I* that take away your sins, but it is *Christ* ONLY; to him only I send you for that purpose; forsaking therein all your good virtues, words, thoughts, and works, and only putting your trust in Christ." "This doctrine advanceth and setteth forth the true glory of Christ, and beateth down the vain glory of man;" and "this doctrine whosoever denieth is not to be accounted for a *Christian* man."[g] Mark this. See of what importance the doctrine of Justification by faith alone in the merit of Jesus Christ was in the estimation of our Reformers.

Believers alone are in a state of acceptance and safety. "*Christ is now the righteousness of all that* TRULY *do believe in him.* He for *them* paid their ransom by his death. He for *them* fulfilled the Law in his life. So that now in him and by him, every TRUE Christian man may be called a fulfiller of the Law;

[f] Hom. on salvation. [g] Ibid.

forasmuch as that, which their infirmity lacketh, Christ's justice hath supplied."[h]

And yet the completeness of believers in Christ does not supersede or make void the necessity of *personal* holiness. "The true, lively and Christian faith, is no dead, vain, or unfruitful thing; but a thing of perfect virtue, of wonderful operation or working, and strength, bringing forth all good motions and good works." "St. Augustine saith, good living cannot be separated from true faith, which worketh by love. St. Chrysostom saith, Faith of itself is full of good works; as soon as a man believeth, he shall be garnished with them." "The first coming unto God is through faith whereby we be justified, and without it no good works can be done." "Do not deceive yourselves, therefore, thinking that you have faith in God, or that you love God, or do trust in him, or do fear him, *when you live in sin*; for then your ungodly and sinful life declareth the contrary, whatever you may think." "Be sure of your faith;—try it by your living."[i]

The faith which is not thus operative and influential is a *dead and useless* faith. "Faith is taken in Scripture in two manner of ways There is one faith which in Scripture is called a *dead* faith, which bringeth forth no good works, but is idle, barren, and unfruitful. And this faith, by St. James, is compared to the faith of Devils, which believe God to be true and just, and tremble for fear; yet they do nothing well but all evil." "This dead faith therefore is not the sure and substantial faith which saveth sinners." "Those who fancy themselves to be set at liberty from all good works, and may live as they list, trifle with God, and deceive themselves, it is a manifest token that they be far from having the true and lively faith, and also far from knowledge what *true* faith meaneth."[k]

[h] Hom. on salvation. [i] Hom. on faith. [k] Sermon on faith.

Hence *no works whatever* of a Man destitute of a true and lively faith are *really* or *essentially good.* "Good deeds are not measured by the facts themselves, and so discerned from vices; but by the *ends and intents* for which they are done." "If a man clothe the naked, feed the hungry, &c. if he does not so in faith for the honour and glory of God, they be but dead, vain, and fruitless works to him." "That work which comes not of faith is nothing: where the faith of Jesus Christ, saith St. Augustine, is not the foundation, there is *no* good work, what building soever we make." "*All* the life of them that lack the true Christian faith is sin, and *nothing* is good without Him that is the Author of goodness." "Faith gives life to the soul and worth to works: and they be as much dead to God that lack faith, as they be to the world, whose bodies lack souls." "Let no man, therefore, reckon upon his good works before his faith; whereas faith was not, good works were not."[1] Be it here remembered, "the *Lord* seeth not as Man seeth: the Lord looketh on the heart."

One other point only shall we adduce. Whilst Salvation is exclusively of grace through faith in Christ, *a Man's destruction is entirely of himself.* "Of *ourselves* and by *ourselves*, we have no goodness, help, nor salvation; but contrariwise, sin, damnation, and death everlasting." "Of *ourselves* cometh all evil and damnation." "The sins of our heart do defile our own selves." And, therefore, if any man perishes under the means of grace, he perishes—not because God has decreed his reprobation, for "God *willeth not* the death of a sinner"—but solely on account of the desperate wickedness, the prevailing pride, and the condemning unbelief of his own heart.

Such is the *summary of Christian doctrine* which we gather from the Writings of the Fathers of our

[1] Sermon of Good Works.

Church. These are the great and essential Doctrines which we teach. If they were necessary in the ministrations of our Reformers, they cannot be unnecessary in ours. If they were "doctrines according to godliness" at *any* time, they must be so still. If they were true once, they must be true now. Truth, we have said, is unalterable. Human nature improves not by generation; man, must, therefore, in all ages need a free and unmerited salvation. From the first transgressor that was saved, to the last that shall be saved, all must be saved alike. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Jesus Christ." "No man can call Jesus, 'Lord,' but by the Holy Ghost." "WITHOUT faith it is impossible to please God." "Faith worketh by love," "and faith WITHOUT works is dead." And "if any man entereth not into the eternal rest which remains for the people of God, it is BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF." Saith not our Church the same?—Then judge ye *who* are the truest friends and most faithful Servants of the Church—those who withhold, weaken, and neglect, the simple peculiarities of the Christian Faith, or those who humbly, constantly, and practically inculcate them.

From our foregoing Summary of Doctrine, we come

II. To draw some obvious *Inferences*:—

We infer 1. How lamentably mistaken are the generality of mankind in their judgment of themselves and of each other.

Do not people generally rest satisfied with the mere decencies of exterior conduct? Have they any idea of their state before God? Do they not rather plume themselves with excellencies that cannot possibly belong to them? Like Israel, they are "as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinances of God," and yet need to be "shewn their transgres-

sions and their sins."[m] Laodicean-like, they say "we are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."[n] "Outward appearance" is the guide and rule of their judgment. The corruption of human nature—the absence of all Christian Principle—the consequent worthlessness of all works however profuse or splendid in worldly estimation—and, in fine, all the great essentials of spiritual piety, are lost sight of and deemed things of little or no value. But this is not to "judge righteous judgment." "The Lord looketh on the heart:" He "requireth truth in the inward parts," and nothing will our favourable opinion of ourselves or of each other avail us while we are destitute of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and unrenewed in the desires and dispositions of our souls. *Eliab* may please the eye of Samuel; but *David* is the Lord's anointed. We may infer, therefore

2. How indispensably necessary are the illuminating influences of the Holy Ghost.

'In writing the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Ghost is in nothing more diligent than to pull down man's vain glory and pride, which of all vices is most universally grafted into all Mankind.' Never shall we cordially submit to the humiliating doctrines of our Faith, unless the Eternal Spirit discover to us their truth in the corresponding propensities of our sinful nature. Spiritual things can only be spiritually discerned: "the natural man," therefore, cannot discern them.[o] Hence many that arrogate to themselves membership with the Established Church, and possibly "despise others," condemn and even ridicule those statements which are the peculiar glory of our Church. Let them, however, as Paul says, become "illuminated"[p] and regenerated by the

[m] Isa. lviii, 1, 2. [n] Rev. iii, 17. [o] 1 Cor. ii, 14.
[p] Heb. x, 32.

power and grace of the Holy Ghost, and, we can dare to say, they will see a propriety and an excellence in our Doctrines, of which they have now no conception. They will see the glory of the Eternal Three, the honour of the One Redeemer, the humiliation of Man's proud heart, the interests of all true Morality, and the spiritual being and prosperity of the Church itself, all involved in them. Every thing would know its proper rank and place in the System of Christian orthodoxy. All would be harmonious in its result—and it would be seen that we deemed our ministrations efficient only just so far as they humbled the Sinner, exalted the Saviour, and promoted universal holiness. Hence we infer,

3. How certainly Religion is an inward and a Spiritual thing. It is the work of the Spirit in the heart. It consists in the exercise of faith, hope, love, fear, and every passion and affection of the renewed man. We mean not to decry forms—they are useful and admirable in their place, and none more so, we believe, than those of our own Church: But a religion of mere form is a body without a soul. The depravity of our nature must be *felt:* We must feel ourselves helpless and weak: feel that apart from Christ we can do nothing: acknowledge cordially the justice of our condemnation in ourselves: gratefully accept what we do not deserve: believe with the heart unto righteousness: serve the Lord with gladness: receive grace to help us in our times of need (and when shall we need it not?) out of the treasured fulness of Jesus Christ: watch and pray: be ever zealously affected in a good cause, and always on the wing of cheerful duty, (like the Cherubim in the Prophet's Vision, Isa. vi. 2.) to execute the will and word of our dear Saviour. This is something above and beyond the formality of Religion. Principle alone can effect this. And no where will you see this experience realized but where "The Truth" is both unhesitatingly, plainly, and fully de-

clared; and cordially embraced, believed, and practised. "The LORD looketh on the *heart:*" "the *root* of the matter" will he examine: the works of *faith* will he reward: the *believer* will he welcome to his joy, and crown with honour: the kingdom of Heaven is not open to others: do what they will, "their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands."[a] Whence, we infer finally and

4. How truly must a man "be born again" ere he can see the kingdom of God.

A change so great must take place in our views, feelings, desires, every thing, that it is as if we were born anew with new perceptions and propensities. The love of self, sin, and the world must be rooted out; the love of God, of holiness, and of Heaven must reign. "All things must become new." We ourselves must become "new creatures in Christ Jesus." And *this* before we can see either the kingdom of God's grace below, or the brighter kingdom of his glory above. To this end is the Gospel preached: by the "incorruptible seed, which is the word of God, are we begotten again;" and when thus "renewed in the spirit of our mind," we shall no longer quarrel with the humbling doctrines of our Church, but love them, and deem most faithful the Ministers who most faithfully dispense them.

[a] Isa. lix, 6.

DISCOURSE VI.

THE NEW BIRTH.

JOHN iii, 7.

Ye must be born again.

NICODEMUS was "a Ruler of the Jews," that is, one of the great Council of the Jewish Nation. He appears to have been a sincere, but timid enquirer after truth. He probably had heard of Jesus, and of the many wonderful works which Jesus did. Not satisfied, however, with hearing of Him, Nicodemus came to Jesus. Being come to Him, Nicodemus said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man could do these miracles which thou doest except God be with him." And do you, then, might our Saviour think, believe me to be a teacher come from God, and yet come to me by stealth, as afraid to acknowledge the authority by which I teach and act?—Without noticing the Ruler's very flattering address, our Lord immediately replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Unknowing how this could be, and perhaps doubting the possibility of the thing, Nicodemus asked, "How can a man be born when he

is old?" This only led our Lord still more emphatically to say, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Nicodemus marvelled: but wherefore should he marvel if Jesus Christ had meant no more than that a man must be initiated into his Church, either by circumcision or by baptism? "Marvel not" continues this gracious teacher of enquiring souls—"marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again." 'As a child of Adam your nature is depraved; your understanding is darkened; your will perverted; your memory tenacious only of evil ideas; your heart prone to fix on present and earthly things; and therefore unless your powers and faculties are changed, enlightened, and renewed, it is morally impossible for you either to discern the nature or to enjoy the pleasures of my Father's kingdom. And such is the change you must experience, that it is as if you were to be "born again"—born into a state of new and spiritual being, with new views, perceptions, and propensities. Be not, therefore, surprised when I so solemnly and repeatedly aver that "*Ye* MUST *be* BORN AGAIN."'

Now I trust that you also, to whom I speak, are come as Nicodemus came, to Jesus, to be taught by him in the truths essentially necessary to your salvation. You have heard the answer made by Jesus Christ unto the Jewish Ruler: but, it may be, like him, you are wondering in yourselves "how these things can be." Do not, however, marvel as if it were a thing incredible or unintelligible, when I say to you, as Jesus said to Nicodemus—"Ye must be born again." Be your hearts upraised to God for "an unction from the Holy One," whilst I endeavour simply to shew you from these words,

I. What the New Birth is,
And II. Whence arises the necessity of it.

I am to shew you,

I. *What the* NEW BIRTH *is*—

What it *is* will more evidently appear if we say what it is *not*. *Baptism* is not the New Birth. We do not doubt but some may be regenerated or born anew in baptism, but we much doubt whether many be so. Some few we see are piously disposed from their earliest years, and a heavenly bias *might* have been given to their mind in and with the ordinance of baptism; but, it is undeniably true, that the generality of baptized persons are openly and notoriously wicked—void, totally void, of all gracions disposition and spirituality of mind whatever. Can we call *such* regenerated or born again? We would give to baptism all the solemnity and importance justly due to it, and we would charitably hope that the child we baptize 'is regenerate:' but we cannot think 'the outward and visible sign' must *necessarily*, in *all* cases, be accompanied with 'the inward and spiritual grace.' It is truly 'not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that are not christened, but it is also a SIGN *of regeneration or new birth*, whereby, as by an instrument, THEY THAT RECEIVE BAPTISM RIGHTLY *are grafted into the Church.*'[a] It is a *sign to those who receive it rightly*, of greater and more substantial good. This good is obtained 'by virtue of prayer unto God:' but how faithless, how heartless, how graceless, are the prayers of the many that usually circle round our baptismal font! We wonder not that those who most strenuously maintain the notion of baptismal regeneration, are constrained to allow the necessity, in the generality of baptized persons, of a 'renovation' subsequent to their baptism. Only let this renovation be inward and spiritual, and not merely outward and

[a] Article xxvii.

formal, and all disputes about the New Birth will end. We contend not about *words*, but *things*. And that baptism is not the New Birth—and that baptized persons are not therefore necessarily born again, your own personal experience will best prove to you. Examine yourselves, and you will soon see whether 'the old Adam be dead in you,' and 'the new Adam be living and growing in you;'—whether you really have been buried with Christ by baptism, and quickened by the Spirit into new and spiritual life. Remember—the Teacher of our Faith taught, that a man must be born "not of water *only*, but of *the Spirit*" also. Of "water" you may have been born: but are you "born of *the Spirit?*" Have you received baptism '*rightly?*' With "*the washing of regeneration*," there must be "*the renewing of the Holy Ghost:*" and it is only where 'the outward sign' has been accompanied or followed by 'the inward grace,' that any one is really 'dead unto sin and alive unto righteousnes'—or, from 'being by nature a child of wrath,' really become 'a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven.'

Moreover, no *reformation or alteration of the Life* is the new Birth. Many will say—'We must reform and alter our lives, in order to be born again.' Amendment of life is the *effect*, not the *cause* of regeneration. Man's condition since the Fall is so utterly weak and helpless, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by any ability in himself, to faith in the Gospel, or calling upon God. The *nature* of the corrupt tree must be changed ere it can produce good fruits. Men may boast themselves indeed of their relationship to God and call themselves "trees of his planting:" But he will say, "Wherefore, when I looked that ye should bring forth grapes, brought ye forth wild grapes?"[b] Fruits there may be—fair and honourable in human

[b] Isa. v, 4.

view: on these man may look; and *he* can look no further; but "the LORD (be it remembered) looketh on the *heart:*" and before him, a reformation or an alteration of the life cannot possibly supersede a conversion of the soul.

Further, a *profession of Religion* is not the new Birth. To a sober, honest, industrious life, may be added an observance of the Sabbath; attendance at Church; giving alms; partaking of the Communion; and, in short, every thing that constitutes a religious profession; and yet all this may exist where there is no participation of the Holy Ghost,[c] no spiritual discernment,[d] no joy in God,[e] no freedom from the bondage of corruption and the fear of man,[f] no cordial delight in the Law,[g] no zeal for works really good,[h] no *any thing* that marks the character of a child of grace and an heir of glory. What was Nicodemus? A professor and a teacher of religion; one that entertained favourable thoughts of Christ (which many an one called *Christian* does not)—and came to him for instruction: and yet to *him*, and in him to us, did our Redeemer say, "YE must be born again." And what was Simon?[i] A man convinced of sin, apprehensive of danger, (something more than many a professor amongst us ever felt), admitted by baptism into the visible Church of Christ, desirous to receive the Holy Ghost, and yet with all his pretences to godliness, and notwithstanding his baptism itself, most plainly told that he was "in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity."

If, then, neither Baptism, nor Reformation of Life, nor a Profession of Religion, be the New Birth, what is it? I will tell you *what* it is: It is a *supernatural*, an *internal*, an *universal*, a *sensible*, and a *visible change*.

[c] Heb. vi, 4. [d] 1 Cor. ii, 14. [e] Rom. v, 11.
[f] 2 Cor. iii, 17. [g] Rom. vii, 22. [h] Gal. iv, 18.
[i] Acts viii.

It is a *supernatural* change. We mean by 'supernatural' that which is above the power of Nature to effect. As man cannot create so neither can he re-create himself. The New Birth, therefore, can only be effected by the power of God. "Who," asks the Patriarch Job, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one"—is his positive and decisive answer.[k] "Can," asks the prophet Jeremiah, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the Leopard his spots?" Assuming that they cannot, the Prophet answers, "So no more can ye do good that have been accustomed to do evil."[l] And, says a greater than Jeremiah or Job, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh"—and would be so however repeatedly born, nor could it possibly possess other than fleshly or carnal propensities. In truth, mankind can no more quicken themselves into new and spiritual life, than the buried dead can, of themselves, burst the bands of Death asunder, vacate their graves, and resume the businesses and cares of mortal life. In wickedness were we shapen; in sin conceived; and in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing.[m] If so, then it follows, "No man hath quickened his own soul."[n] And if no man *hath* quickened, no man *can* quicken his own soul. It must, therefore, be by a supernatural power that any persons are born again. And so it is written, "It is *the Spirit* that quickeneth; the *flesh* profiteth nothing."[o] Spiritual life is a thing which, as our Church acknowledges, by nature we cannot have. It is "*of the Spirit*" as the Divine and Gracious *Agent*, and *by the Word* as the appointed *means* that we are "begotten again."[p] The Spirit works at various times and in various ways—*as*, and *how*, and *where*, "he listeth:" but He is the alone Regenerator, and the regeneration he effects is universally a *supernatural* change.

[k] Ch. xiv, 4. [l] Ch. xiii, 23. [m] Ps. 51, 5. Rom. vii, 18.
[n] Ps. 22, 30. [o] John vi, 63. [p] 1 Pet. i, 22, 23.

It is, too, an *internal* change. This remark we have anticipated by saying that no reformation or alteration of the Life, is the New Birth. We cannot, however, too particularly insist on the doctrine of an inward and a spiritual change. Turn to Ezekiel xxxvi, and 26, and you will find God promises us "a new *heart* and a new *spirit*;" and which new heart and spirit He will "put *within* us." And again he says in verse 27, "I will put MY *spirit* within you, and cause you to walk in my way." Now this was said well nigh 600 years before the Son of God became incarnate, and yet Jesus Christ preaches and perpetuates the doctrine of a change of heart and spirit. The word commonly used in Greek for 'repentance' implies a change of the affections and dispositions. Paul says, "with the *heart* a man believeth unto righteousness."[q] "It is in the *heart* the love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost."[r] Peace, too, rules in the *heart* of the regenerate.[s] We are wont to beseech God to 'cleanse the thoughts of our *heart*,' and that 'we may daily be renewed in the *spirit of our mind*.' All which expressions shew that the New Birth is an *internal* thing, and that to be really born again we must be internally changed. As by generation "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,"[t] so by regeneration it must become the seat of all piety and truth.[v] Few, indeed, think thus. Often do we hear it said—'Practice is every thing: so that a man's life be good, it little matters what he believes or thinks.' But, *we* say, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin;"[w] and whatsoever proceeds not from a gracious and spiritual principle, is any thing but pleasing or acceptable to God.[x] We must be "born OF the Spirit" *to be* spiritually minded: and without this spiritual and *internal* change, no outward duties will constitute a regenerated character.

[q] Rom. x, 10.
[r] Rom. v, 5.
[s] Col. iii, 15.
[t] Jer. xvii, 9.
[v] Ps. 51, 10.
[w] Rom. xiv. 23.
[x] Art. 13.

But, I said, the New Birth was an *universal* change. If the corruption of human nature be deep and universal, (and who that believes the Bible can doubt its depth and universality?) our regeneration must be equally deep and universal. "From *all* your filthiness and from *all* your idols, will I cleanse you," is a gracious God's recorded promise.[y] Our Prayer is '*perfectly* to love Him and *worthily* to magnify His holy name.' Now, "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from *all* sin," and on whomsoever it is "sprinkled, it purgeth the conscience from dead works;"[z] whilst the Holy Spirit, as a hallowing fire, sanctifies and renews all the powers of the pardoned and accepted sinner.[a] We say *all* the powers; for where this change takes place, the understanding is enlightened, the will is subdued, the disposition newly biassed, the imagination purified, selfishness expelled, the heart humbled, and, as the unfailing consequence of all—the life reformed. Regenerating grace assimilates man's nature to God's nature, man's will to God's will, man's mind to God's mind.[b] In short, we are "*transformed* by the renewing of our mind,"[c]—*transfigured** as was Jesus in the holy Mount: we catch somewhat of his radiancy, and "put on the *new* man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."[d] Surely then where "old things are thus passed away and all things become new," the change must be great and *universal*.

And can this change take place, and the subject of it remain unconscious of his spiritual birth? No: it is a *sensible* change. The persons in whom it is wrought are, in general, as sensible of it as of their

* So the word "transformed" reads in the original.

[y] Exek. xxxvi, 25. [z] Heb. ix, 14. [a] 1 Pet. i, 2. Heb. x, 22
[b] 2 Pet. i, 3—4. Eph. vi, 7. 1 Pet. iv. 1. [c] Rom. xii, 2.
[d] Eph. iv, 24.

existence. I say, in *general*, because I believe that some are drawn so easily and gently by the Father, through the Spirit, to the Son,[e] that they know not how or when their minds have been wrought upon: whereas, commonly, sinners are roused from their deathful slumbers by alarm and terror—"cut (as were those under Peter's Ministry, Acts ii. 37.) to the heart"—constrained to cry for mercy from an agonising sensibility of sin—humbled deeply before the Lord—and led to see that but for sovereign favour through the blood of Christ, they should deservedly be condemned for ever. Whether "the fire" or "the earthquake" or "the small still voice,"[f] produce it, conviction of sin is the same, and discovers the same needs-be for the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, in all true penitents. When these, in their richness and sufficiency, are perceived, the graciousness of God will be tasted;[g] the sweetness of his mercy will be felt;[h] a principle of spiritual life will be perceived; the sincere milk of the word will be desired; self will become nothing, the Saviour all in all; the formality of religion will be lost in its power; the world will appear to be what it really is while God is not loved in it—a passing phantom; its good will now be really and thankfully enjoyed, and beyond it will "glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life" brighten on the believing view of the truly converted soul. Can all this take place, we again demand, and the subject of the change be unconscious of it?—Let us suppose some captive wretch to be brought out of

> "Dungeon horrors, darkness and stench,
> Where he had lain the worm's inferior:"

place him on some fair eminence where above him stretch the heavens in azure brilliancy, and around and

[e] John vi, 44. [f] 1 Kings xix, 12. [g] 1 Pet. ii, 3. [h] Ps. 109, 21.

far beyond his ken the works of nature spread in rich and beautiful variety: will no gladness thrill through his recently dejected bosom? will no trace remain in memory's records of his former wretchedness? will nothing assure him of his deliverance from it? Most certainly there will: and *as certainly* may a child of God "look to the rock whence he was hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence he was digged,"[1] and adore most sensibly the gracious Agent of his deliverance from it. "A spirit of adoption" will assure him of his safety and lead him to "joy in the Lord and to rejoice in the God of his salvation." Some will say, 'our affections or feelings have nothing to do with our religion:'—they truly have nothing to do with the religion of *those* who say so: but the sorrows and the pains of remorse; the peace which passeth understanding; the hope which maketh not ashamed; hunger and thirst after righteousness; patience in tribulation—are all things to be experienced, perceived, and *felt;* and therefore the New Birth must necessarily be—if not in its commencement, at least, in its effects, a *sensible* change.

And now we are brought, finally, to say, that the New Birth is a *visible* change. Demureness of countenance or peculiarity of dress, is, we believe, no index of the heart. But where this change is mercifully wrought, anger, pride, malice, envy, falsehood,—disappear; and humility, meekness, love, truth, kind and forbearing gentleness, become apparent. As with the wind which bloweth where it listeth, we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is it with every one that is born of the Spirit. We see the effects of the mighty wind or the gentler breeze; though we know not the mode of their operation: In like manner do we witness the reality of spiritual influences, in the effects which they

[1] Isa. li, 1.

produce. A man's New Birth is evident to *himself*. He loves, affects, desires, and seeks spiritual things; whereas, he once did not, but felt utterly averse to them and was ignorant of their intrinsic excellence. It is evident to *others*. If one from the remotest corner of the globe, that had experienced a similar change, should meet him, there would be a congeniality of taste and feeling between them. They would meet each other as brethren. The unregenerate, too, though they feel at a loss to account for it, observe the change: They see the drunkard become sober, the swearer fearing an oath. They marvel, indeed, to see these things: and because they are themselves condemned by the altered conduct of their friend or neighbour, they must needs, therefore, to screen and excuse themselves, "cast out *his* name as evil," and say—no matter what, even if it be,—"Thou hast a devil and art mad."[k] Thus *visible*, however, is the change which God the Holy Ghost effects in every true member of the Redeemer's holy and Catholic Church. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, *but a* NEW CREATURE;"[l] and "*if any man* BE *in Christ, he* IS *a new creature*;"[m] and has experienced that *supernatural, internal, universal, sensible*, and *visible* CHANGE without which, it is the declaration of "the Truth" itself, a man can neither see nor enter the kingdom of God.

Such, then, Beloved, is the New Birth—whether you may have heard it called Regeneration, Renovation, or any thing else: It comes in the end to this, "ye must be *born again*."

I am now to show you

II. *Whence arises the* NECESSITY *of it*:—

The *Necessity* of the new birth could easily be shewn

[k] John x, 20. [l] Gal. vi, 15. [m] 2 Cor. v, 17.

from many passages of Holy Writ: but without departing from the words of our text, you hear the Lord Jesus Christ declare—"Ye MUST be born again." Now this necessity arises

1. From the character of Him who declares it;

And 2. From the New Birth's being absolutely necessary in order both to our present and eternal happiness.

Consider 1. *The character of Him who declares it.* Jesus Christ was with the Father "as one brought up with him," and everlastingly "his delight."[n] Jesus Christ had "a glory" indescribable and unutterable "with the Father before the World was."[o] "By him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him."[p] When one world fell from its allegiance to its Maker, and became the apostate and rebellious province of his great empire, Jesus Christ came personally to reclaim its miserable people, to expiate, by his own voluntary sufferings and death, the guilt of their apostacy and rebellion, to dissipate by his instruction their moral and spiritual darkness, and to be himself the Exemplar of all he taught mankind. As "a Teacher come from God," did Nicodemus acknowledge him, and in this acknowledged character, did Jesus Christ declare, "Ye *must* be born again." Circumcision, (and therefore no other mere initiatory rite) He could not mean by being born again; for Nicodemus was already circumcised, and was by circumcision already initiated into the Jewish Church; and yet our Lord solemnly and repeatedly insists on the Necessity of a new and spiritual birth. Now, can it be supposed (and with reverence be it spoken) that Jesus Christ would teach or preach a lie? Can it be supposed that he

[n] Prov. viii, 23—30. [o] John xvii, 5. [p] Col. i, 16.

would say what he did not mean? Did he say "ye *must* be born again," and is there no necessity for our being "renewed in the spirit of our mind?" Depend upon it, as surely as Jesus Christ said "Ye *must* be born again," so surely *must* we be supernaturally, internally, universally, sensibly, and visibly changed. Call the New Birth what you please: Believe yourselves, if you please, to have been born again in your Baptism; yet must there be a very great change of heart experienced, before you can possibly be the true disciples of Christ, or "set to your seal that his Testimony is true." Born again we *must* be, or the doctrine of Jesus Christ will be proved unnecessary and delusive: Born again we *must* be, or be excluded for ever from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. "Heaven and Earth may pass away, but his Word shall not pass away:" "Every tittle of it shall be fulfilled;" and we may see the Necessity of the New Birth from *the character of Him who declares it.*

But we may see it (2) *From its being absolutely necessary both to our present and eternal happiness.* It is absolutely necessary to our *present* happiness. People may pretend to be happy in an unrenewed state, but really to be so is impossible. The carnal mind, (that is, the mind unchanged in its affections and desires) is enmity against God,[q] and whilst that enmity against God remains, there can be no satisfaction or enjoyment. "Who will shew us any good?" is Nature's cry, and from natural principle, all men affect happiness: but "the light of God's countenance" alone imparts it, and *this* it is not the property of nature to affect or value. If earthly riches, worldly wisdom, or sensual delights, could ever have made a human being happy, Solomon would have been the happy man: yet, lo! *this* is the very man that cries,

[q] Rom. viii, 7.

"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."[r] Nor is he singular in this respect. The unregenerate of every age are constrained to allow, that the world in which we sojourn is, with all its glory, an unsatisfying, a poor, and empty thing, without a hope beyond it. This strongly indicates the necessity of an inward change. To be inwardly serene amidst outward tumults—to be resigned and cheerful amidst the sorrows, the privations, and disappointments of life, we *must* be born again. And where the new-creating energy of the Holy Ghost hath "begotten us again unto a lively hope," what a different scene of things appears! *Before* we wandered in ways erroneous and dangerous: *now* we walk in ways of pleasantness and paths of peace. *Before* we "hated God," and "would none of Him," *now* we love him, and can say with satisfying gladness, "The Lord is my portion: whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison of Thee." *Before* we "saw no form or comeliness" in Jesus Christ: *now* He is our "Beloved," and "the Altogether Lovely." *Before*, it may be, we could impiously and scornfully mock the subject of spiritual influences on the human mind; *now* our "Comforter" is "the Holy Ghost," and "we are not ignorant of Satan's devices." *Before* we could (as we believed) reconcile the services and the interests of "*two* Masters;" *now* we renounce "Mammon," and "cleave with purpose of heart to the Lord." *Before* "a *name* to live" contented us; *now* we are "*alive*." *Before* the pleasures of sense were all agreeable to us; *now* those of a purer, nobler, and more ennobling kind are preferable. *Before* Religion was a gloomy, melancholy thing; *now* it is the "one thing needful"—and to sit at the feet of Jesus, and to hear His word, is "the very joy and rejoicing of our heart." Thus does "the Spirit witness with our spirits, that

[r] Eccl. i, 2.

we are the children of God;"[s] and the children of God need scarcely to be told that "the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it."[t]

And if the New Birth be thus absolutely necessary to our present, it is no less absolutely necessary to our *eternal* happiness. *So* absolutely necessary is it that there is no entering Heaven without it. The necessity of the New Birth arises from the very nature of things. Supposing it possible for an unconverted man to enter the kingdom of God, he could not be happy there—it would be NO *Heaven to him*. The company, the employments, the pleasures, the converse, of the place would be all offensive to him—would be all at variance with his feelings, dispositions, and wants. Would you see this proved to demonstration? Bring a worldly, wicked man into a company of serious, godly people: let them maintain a "conversation according to the Gospel of Christ"—let them read His Word, shew forth His praises, and supplicate His mercies. What would the man whom we have supposititiously brought among them enjoy of it all? Why, nothing whatever, and it would be felt as a deliverance from thraldom to be free from his associates. Then let this man die: let Him, if it be possible, enter Heaven in an unregenerate state: what would he do there? how could he join in the higher praises, and the sublimer worship of the heavenly world? Would the visible glory of the Eternal God, or the society of unfallen angels, or redeemed souls, delight him? No! and why? Because his *nature* bears no resemblance to their's, and his *taste* savours not spiritual things. Heaven itself, then, would be a "strange place," and a place void of felicity to one not "born from above." But how is it with the spiritually minded man—the "new creature in Christ Jesus"—the child of adopting and regenerating grace, in the world of glory? Is it a

[s] Rom. viii, 16. [t] Prov. x, 22.

"strange place" to *him?* Oh! no: it is the land of his nativity: it is to him a "place beautiful for situation," and equally beautiful with its situation is its society, its converse, its worship, its every thing. Having passed the waves of this troublesome world, the Christian gains "the haven where he would be."[v] He does but change his dwelling place—not his work or pleasure. There is indeed this difference, *before* he saw "through a glass darkly, *now* he sees face to face to face;" *before* he communed with an unseen Saviour, and worshipped with the Church in its militant and preparatory state; *now* he enjoys the immediate vision of his Lord, and worships with the Church triumphant. Grace is ripened into Glory. The grapes of Eschol are forgotten in the abundance of Canaan: the beginnings of happiness are lost in its consummation. As he that is *not* "born of the Spirit" *cannot* enter into the kingdom of God, so to him that *is* born of the Spirit, "an abundant entrance shall therein be ministered." We, therefore, conclude, that *the New Birth is absolutely necessary both to our present and eternal happiness.*

I have now shewn you, and I hope simply, what the New Birth is, and whence arises the necessity of it. A few words of ADVICE shall close this discourse.

I advise you, then, Beloved, solemnly to enquire whether you be, in the Scriptural and obvious import of the expression, *born again* or not Enquire, I pray you, into this matter. Seek a practical assurance rather than a groundless notion of your spiritual birth. Evidence the Word of God affords you, and by it you may come to some certain knowledge, to some satisfactory conclusion, relative to your state and hopes. Do not too surely conclude that because you are baptized that you must therefore necessarily be born again. It is written—not 'He that is baptized' but—"He

[v] Ps. 10-7, 30

that is BORN OF GOD, *overcometh the world.*"[w] Now, what is the world to you? Is it as an object crucified and dead to your affections and desires? Have you overcome alike its smiles and frowns? Allowing you have not overcome them, are you in the way to overcome them?—Again it is written—not 'He that is baptized' but—"He that is BORN OF GOD, *doth not, cannot, commit sin.*"[x] Now, how is it with you? Is sin, in its every form and kind, odious to you? Do you "shrink from it as from the face of a Serpent? Cannot you willingly commit it? Is it the one "abominable thing" which you "hate" both in yourselves and others? Do you mourn in bitterness of spirit for the woes which your suffering Surety endured for sin?—Again it is written—not 'Whoso is baptized' but—"Whoso heareth and hath learned of the Father cometh unto Christ."[y] Came ye ever unto Christ? Come ye to him daily and continually? Receive ye "out of *his* fulness grace upon grace?" If not, can you have "heard and learned of the Father?" Finally (for the time would fail us to quote the many Scriptures which bear upon our subject) it is written—not 'The fruit of baptism' but—"The fruit of THE SPIRIT *is love, joy, peace, long suffering, meekness, gentleness, faith,* &c.[z] Do these fruits severally and together grow in your hearts? Do they evidence "that mind to be in you which was also in Christ Jesus?"—Enquire, I again beseech you. He was "not a Jew who was one only outwardly:" Can he be a Christian that is one only outwardly? Circumcision profited little when it was only "outward in the flesh:" Can Baptism profit more without "a death unto Sin and a New Birth unto righteousness?" If, then, that Birth be a *supernatural* change, do not fancy you can renew yourselves: cry rather with David, "Create in me a clean heart, *O* GOD, and renew a right spirit within

[w] 1 John v, 4. [x] 1 John iii, 9. [y] John vi, 45. [z] Gal. v, 22.

me."[a] If it be an *internal* change, do not conceive that any mere amendment of the life will suffice. The axe must be laid to the *root* of the corrupt tree, and not merely some of its branches felled. If it be an *universal* change, no favourite idol must be retained, no besetting sin be spared, no one virtue of the new man despised: "Behold, saith the Lord, I create *all* things new."[b] If it be a *sensible* change, see to it that your acquaintance with the Truth be—not merely of a notional or a theoretical, but, of an experimental and an influential kind. If it be a *visible* change, and "the light of Life" hath dawned upon you, and made you "children of the Light and of the Day," then be your whole deportment radiant with candour, generosity, truth, and love.[c] While though "favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness, and even in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord;"[d] let "*our Gospel come to you not in word* ONLY, but ALSO *in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.*"[e] Then shall you "rejoice in that your names are written in Heaven." "Ministering spirits" whom the pains of your repentance gladdened, shall safely conduct you through Death's shadowy vale, and beyond it in a world of sinless cloudless blessedness shall your immortal souls "reign in life" with your all-glorious Creator, Saviour, and Regenerator, for ever and ever.

[a] Ps. 51, 10. [b] Rev. xxi, 5. [c] Matt. v, 16.
[d] Isa. xxvi, 10 [e] 1 Thess. i, 5

DISCOURSE VII.

EZEKIEL'S VISION OF THE DRY BONES.

EZEKIEL XXXVII, 1—10.

And the hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones. And caused me to pass by them round about; and, behold there were very many in the open valley, and lo! they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord: Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and ye shall live, and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo! the sinews and the flesh came up upon them; and the skin covered them above: but—there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, prophesy unto the wind; prophesy, Son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, come from the four winds,

O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied, as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

I PURPOSE a familiar exposition of this portion of Holy Scripture. It is singularly beautiful and striking: and though written at a particular period, and on a special occasion, it is doubtless written for "*our* admonition" and instruction. While we approve not of far-fetched and unnatural deductions from the Word of God, we yet believe ourselves at liberty, with humility and modesty, to gather instructions from every part of the Sacred Volume, and to appropriate to our use whatever "holy men of old spake" or wrote "by the Holy Ghost." This we deem of importance to be remarked, because an appropriation of our text to other and various things, will subsequently be perceived, which could not, of course, be contemplated by Ezekiel when he penned it. Our remarks, however, will be those of an obvious and a simple kind; and in the stead of any formal arrangement of our matter, we shall notice the several incidents narrated in our text as they follow each other in succession.

"The hand of the Lord was upon me," says the Prophet, "and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones." In various ways was Jehovah wont to reveal his will to his servants. Visibly did he appear to Adam[a] and to Abraham:[b] with the latter "He talked as a man talketh to his friend."[1] By an audible voice he spake to Moses,[c] and to Samuel also.[d] "In dreams and visions of the night" he spake to many. To Daniel and to Peter he thus spake.[e] Paul appears

[a] Gen. iii, 8 [b] Gen. xviii, 22. [c] Exod. iii, 4
[d] 1 Sam. iii, 10 [e] Dan. vii, 13—Acts x, 17

to have been in a kind of rapturous ecstacy when the Gospel was revealed to him.[f] John was "in the Spirit," that is, was under the full and powerful influence of the Holy Ghost, and in himself most spiritually and devoutly disposed, when "the revelations of Jesus Christ" were vouchsafed to him.[g] In like manner was Ezekiel "carried out by the hand of Jehovah, *in the Spirit*" to "the valley of vision," and by the Spirit's powerful operation on his mind, he was enabled to discern the present degradation of his people, the means of their regeneration, and their eventual restoration to favour, to honour, and to glory. In none of these ways does the Lord speak to us. No new revelations of his will are to be expected. His word contains his mind, and there we are to search for it. The *ordinary* operations of the Spirit we may, indeed, desire and pray for. *These* ARE necessary, and without them it is impossiple for us to discern spiritual things.[h] Here, then, let us beseech "the good hand of the Lord upon us, and beg him by his Spirit to "guide us into all Truth."

We notice now a certain *valley*. This valley is described as an "open valley," which we may suppose to mean a widely extended plain. When Ezekiel prophesied, the Jews were captives in Babylon. Babylon was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, and is believed to have been situated in a large and beautiful plain. It was by the waters of Babylon Judah's captives sat and wept when they remembered Zion.[i] Hither was the Prophet in vision brought, and in the midst of this valley did the hand of the Lord set him down. We need not, however, confine our view to the valley of Judah's captivity and Ezekiel's vision: we may suppose the valley here described to be the world itself in which we sojourn: It may in our supposition include every part of the habitable globe, and be bounded only

[f] 2 Cor. xii, 2 [g] Rev, i, 10 [h] 1 Cor. ii, 14
[i] Ps. 137, 1

by the ends of the earth: Our world is a valley of mourning: often are our harps suspended on the willows: We are "strangers in a strange place;" and be situated wheresoever we may, "the valley of the shadow of death"[k] stretches boundlessly before us. Here we are "set;" and from noticing the valley, we proceed to notice

The *bones* scattered over it. These are in *number* "many," "very many," and in *condition* "dry," "very dry." The bones which Ezekiel saw were "the whole house of Israel." So fallen, so depressed, so sorrowful, were they, at this time, that to nothing could the Holy Spirit compare them, as more aptly indicative of their state, than to "bones," "very dry" bones. Contemplate a bone: it has no life: it lies inert and motionless: its moisture wastes: its substance perishes. Such was Israel's state. Nor is this state peculiar to Israel: mankind generally and universally over all the earth are the same by nature. We are all in bondage; we are all oppressed and sorrowful. "From the crown of our head to the sole of our foot, there is no soundness in us." "Our strength is dried up." "The multitude of our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth:"[l] and scattered are they at the grave's mouth in great and profuse abundance. It is calculated that there exist a thousand millions of human beings. Must we not, then, allow that there are "very many in the world's wide valley?" And what is the spiritual condition of these millions of human beings? Of the thousand millions, six hundred millions are said to be heathens: many millions are Mahomedans; some millions are Jews, and other millions, again, are "worshippers of the beast,"[m] and followers of "the Man of Sin."[n] Of the remain-

[k] Ps. 23—4 [l] Ps. 141–7 [m] Rev. xiii, 3, 12
[n] 2 Thess. ii, 3

ing millions that bear a christian name, how few do we find to be likeminded with Christ! Are not, then, the bones of our valley "dry," "very dry?" We may contract our survey: We need not look abroad over the world's wide valley: we need only look at home and over the little spot on which we dwell, and we shall see many dry, very dry bones about us. In Egypt, an exceeding great and bitter cry was heard when the first born of every family was slain: Is there not many a family in our land where not one of all its members is spiritually alive? Are we ourselves alive? Are our "bones made fat," and "our souls" rich and luxuriant "as a watered garden?" Rather, are not many of us as dead to God and to the things of Eternity, as the buried bones of our departed friends are dead to the world and to the things of Time?—God, however, in infinite mercy, condescends to notice us: From His high and lofty dwelling-place, he looks inquiringly down and says, "CAN *these dry bones live?*"

Let us consider this *inquiry*. The people of Israel and Judah had lost their existence as a nation: they were "a people cast out, trodden down, scattered and peeled." Many of them were indifferent to their situation, forgetful of the land of their fathers; unmindful of their former glory, and not solicitous to regain it. "Can they then live?" saith the Lord to his servant. The inquiry is to try the faith, to exercise the hope, and to awaken the desire of Ezekiel. A Minister of God needs trials to fit him for his office. Perhaps there are few or none whom the Holy Ghost moves to take the ministerial office on them but who are fitted for it by trials of faith, struggles with sin, and "fightings" with the great enemy of Christ and his Church. Certainly trials make our Ministry the more efficient and teach us more sensibly to "weep with them that weep." It is no little pain to us to witness the state of our people. We see among them

many "*dead* in trespasses and sins;"[o] others with less consideration than the ox or the ass,[p] and so altogether earthly and sensual that they "may well be compared to the beasts which perish."[q] We see no desire in many to come out of Babylon, to regain the grandeur of their former greatness,[r] and to repossess the Canaan of blissful holiness. We have "continual sorrow and heaviness in our heart" for them, and when amidst the fruitlessness of our labours for them we are asked "*Can* they live?" we can only reply to the inquiry, as the Prophet did—"*O Lord God, thou knowest.*"

This *answer* let us notice. God had said to Moses, "I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me: I kill, and I make alive, I wound, and I heal."[s] Ezekiel, therefore, had ground whereon, amidst manifold discouragements, to stay the foot of faith, and to believe that what was "impossible with Man was possible with God." Nor have we less ground for faith in the power of God than Ezekiel had. We are sure that God could "even of these stones raise up Children unto Abraham." To the inquiry, Can they live? "we have the *answer* (marginal reading) of Death in ourselves, that we should not *trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead.*"[t] Even such "dry bones" as we *can* live when the Lord God wills and commands it. For our people, too, we look, amidst all our tribulations on their behalf, to our Saviour-God, and "in the bowels of Jesus Christ, we long" for the commencement of light, and life, and liberty in their souls. "Wilt thou not, we say, turn again and revive us that thy people may rejoice in thee?"[v] "Lord, what wilt thou have us to do?"[w] Shall thine Israel never be redeemed? Shall the years of their mourning know no

[o] Eph. ii, 1. [p] Isaiah i, 3. [q] Ps. 49–20.
[r] Gen. xi, 31. [s] Deut. xxxii, 39. [t] 2 Cor. i, 9.
[v] Ps. 85–6. [w] Acts ix, 6.

close? Thou knowest they can live, and even "be born in a day" when Thou pleasest: "Oh! let us live, and we shall glorify thy Name."—Graciously does the Lord direct the labours of his servant,—"*Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord.*"

This *direction* respecting the bones is very observable. They were dry, very dry, and yet Ezekiel was directed to "prophesy upon them." They were to be addressed as if they possessed sensibility and life: "O ye dry bones, *hear* the Word of the Lord." This very plainly intimates that sinners—sinners in whom we can discern nothing but "a carnal mind" and its inseparable "enmity against God," are to be addressed in our ministrations of the Word. If mankind *be* void, generally, of spiritual life or perception, it is the fault and corruption of their nature. And however faulty and corrupt that nature is, man must still be accountable for the deeds done in it. If our "bones say not, Lord, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him,"[w] it is simply because we cry not, "Heal me, O Lord, for my bones are vexed;"[x] and we cry not, simply because we have no disposition to accept the humbling salvation of the Gospel. In like manner do many "stop their ears and harden their hearts" against the preached Word. Preach, however, we must "upon" the dry bones of our vallies. 'We preach not to sinners,' say some:—they are ambassadors to the elect, as they pretend: but Ezekiel, Peter, Paul, and John, all were commissioned to "rebuke" as well as to "exhort"—to preach the needs be for penitence in sinners as well as faith in the elect. A greater than them all preached repentance,[y] and still by his Word "God commandeth *all* men *every where* to repent."[z] If we be not to

[w] Ps. 35,—10. [x] Ps. 6—2. [y] Mark i, xv
[z] Acts xvii, 30.

preach to sinners, I wonder who we are to preach to: for the world, alas! is "full" of them, and alas! also, they be "very dry." Is it said, "There is a remnant according to the election of grace?"[a] Very true; there undoubtedly is, and "the *Lord* knoweth them that are his:" but since *we* do not, we must proclaim "peace as well to them that are afar off, as to them that are nigh." We must come to the Babylon of ignorance, unbelief, and sin—come to the vale of vision, and say to the dryest bones we meet with there,—"O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." "Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear" our commission is the same. Our duty plainly is to "preach the Word; to be instant in season and out of season." We shall be "a sweet savour unto God *both* in them that believe and in them that perish;"[b] and though our heart may feel a pang of grief for those to whom "our Gospel comes in word only," yet are we encouraged to "prophecy upon them" by the sweet assurance that, "The hour cometh and now is when *the dead* shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."[c] "Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, *I* will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: and *I* will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord." (See text.) And "is *any* thing too hard for the Lord?" "Hath he said, and shall he not do it?" "Hath he spoken, and shall he not bring it to pass?" —Israel shall live when it pleases Israel's God. "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body (says He that was dead and is alive again and liveth for evermore) shall they arise:"[d] and, quickened into new and spiritual being, we poor "dust and ashes" shall

[a] Rom. xi, 5. [b] 2 Cor. ii, 15. [c] John v, 25.
[d] Isaiah xxvi, 19.

become "members of a Saviour's flesh and of his bones."[e] The great end and design, too, of the Ministry may be here observed. God could quicken and regenerate whom He would without man's instrumentality or word: but he is pleased to put honour on his gospel, and to make its Ministers vessels of mercy and instruments of good to their fellows. "*Thus saith the Lord*" is the ministerial watch-word: and "*the word of the Lord*," through the Spirit's agency, becomes the mighty means of turning mankind "from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God." Hence we read, "of his own will begat he us with the word of truth;" that is of God's will as the *source* of our regeneration, are we *born again* by *means* of the word of truth."[f] "Quick and powerful" is his word when the Holy Ghost falls on them that hear it.[g] And in the believing hope that it will ever prove itself to be "the *sword* of the Spirit," we say to one and all of you, "O ye dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord:" "Hear and your souls shall live." Dry ye may be, very dry; but unless ye might "have life," God would never have commanded his word to be preached unto you.[h]

Such was the *direction* given to Ezekiel. Mark now his *observance* of it. "*So I prophesied*, says he, *as I was commanded*." *How* or in *what manner* the dry bones should hear the word of the Lord, did not trouble Ezekiel. God commanded him to prophesy; that was enough: it was for him, without, for a moment, questioning the wisdom or the propriety or the utility of the command, to do as he was commanded. And he did so. And happy is the Minister who, like the Prophet, can truly say, "So I prophesied as *I was commanded!*" Few, we fear, could do as we find in Acts xx. 27. Paul did—appeal to their hearers and say,

[e] Eph. v, 30. [f] James i, 18. [g] Acts x, 44.
[h] John v, 40.

"I take *you* to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men: for I have not shunned to declare unto you ALL the counsel of God." It is only, however, by a faithful declaration of God's counsel that we can be "pure from the blood of all men." *As* we are commanded, *so* must we speak. The watchman of the house of Israel must hear the word at God's mouth, and warn them from him.[i] And he that hath his word, must declare it faithfully.[k] The truth which may be least acceptable, and most opposed to the habits and pursuits of our hearers, must we as faithfully declare as that which is the more agreeable. Human systems must not warp our judgment, or induce a thought contrary to God's Word. Ignorance must be exposed: Sin must be reproved: Pride must be detected: Self must be humbled: Christian principle inculcated: the obedience of faith required. And truly privileged is that people, who, in their Minister, possess a man devoted first to the Lord, and then to them, and whose one sole aim it is, as much as in him lieth, to teach his people "the good and the right way," and to "save their souls alive." Such an one shall not labour for nought and in vain. The will and purpose of God shall be accomplished, and his "Word shall not return unto him void."

This will appear in the *effect* which Ezekiel's prophesying produced. "So," says he, "I prophesied as I was commanded, and as I prophesied there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And when I beheld, lo! the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them above: but—there was no breath in them." "As he prophesied" this effect was produced. Bone met its kindred bone. A trembling apprehension pervaded them. The whole multitude of bones were chastened

[i] Exek. iii, 17. [k] Jer. xxiii, 28.

as with pain[l] and shook by alarm. Flesh and sinews came upon them and skin covered them above. The form and fashion of a Man appeared—but still there was no breath to animate the newly organized body. An effect similar exactly to this may be produced under the ministry of the Gospel. As we preach, impressions may be made; convictions may be felt; a "noise and a shaking" may be heard amongst the dry bones; sinners, before careless and unconcerned, may begin to enquire; bone may meet its kindred bone; knowledge may increase, and profession follow it, and *yet* no breath may animate the whole. Often do we see all the parts of a religious profession almost perfect and entire: but, on closer scrutiny we find there is no real sensibility or life. We might suppose a man lying in yonder field to be only asleep; when we come to him we may find him dead. So, many have "a *Name* to live, that are really dead." Many are convinced that are never converted Many are brought out of darkness into light, that are not turned from Satan unto God.[m] "A spirit of bondage" may be endured, where "a spirit of adoption" is never enjoyed. A way may "seem right unto a man" that does but "*seem*" so, and "the *end* of which is death."[n] The prophet saw the bones of the valley brought together and reorganized; but there was still no breath in them. In like manner may we see our people congregated, and "the *form* of godliness" assumed, but no vitality may be felt—no "*power*" of godliness experienced. This the Lord knows, and therefore condescends still further to direct his servant's labours.

This *further direction* now calls for our attention. "Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." Human eloquence, combined with human effort, may effect somewhat of a moral

[l] Job. xxxiii, 19 [m] Acts xxvi, 18 [n] Prov. xiv, 12

change in a people; but it is not, as we have seen, even in an Ezekiel's power to impart life to the soul. Hence was he directed to beseech a breath to come from the four winds, and breathe upon the slain of Israel that they might live. Here we observe that "breath," or "wind," is in Scripture frequently significant of the *Holy Ghost*. It is somewhere said, "By the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made, and all the host of them by *the breath* of his mouth:"[o] that is, *Jehovah*, the *Word*, and the eternal *Spirit*, by their individual and united energy, created the Heavens and their host. In John iii, 8, the Spirit's agency is compared to the *wind* which bloweth where it listeth. We are told also, that before our Lord reassumed his glory, he "breathed" on his disciples;[p] indicating, doubtless, thereby, that they should receive a portion of that Spirit which was given without measure unto him, and thus be animated with the breath of a Spiritual and Heavenly existence. On the day of Penticost, the Spirit, as "the Spirit of promise,"[q] came upon the infant Church of the Redeemer "like a rushing mighty wind," filling the house wherein they were assembled with his influence, and the hearts of the Redeemer's followers with joy and gladness.[r] Still is this celestial breath necessary to give vigour to our word and life to our souls. The word alone and of itself quickens not: for then all our hearers would be "alive unto God." Nor does the morality or the wisdom of man give power and unction to our word: for then would not the most moral and the wisest be the first to receive the truth? whereas they are usually the last.[s] 'Unless the Spirit be with the heart of the hearer, the Word of the teacher is barren. Let no man attribute to the teacher what he understands from his mouth; for, unless there

[o] Ps. 33, 6. [p] John xx, 22. [q] John xv, 26. Eph. i, 13.
[r] Acts ii, 2, 46. [s] Matt. xxi, 31, 32.

be an internal teacher, the tongue of the external one labours in vain. Why is there such a difference in the sensations of hearers, all hearing the same words? It is to be ascribed to this special teaching. John himself, in his Epistle, teaches the same; 'the anointing teacheth you of all things.'* This is "the unction" which alone can give vitality to the soul and reality to religion. Bones there may be; sinews, flesh, and skin: but only God the Holy Ghost can infuse a principle of animation and existence. 'His presence is living and powerful; it awakens the slumbering soul: it moves, softens, wounds, and heals the hard, stony, and distempered heart. It waters the dry places, illumines the dark, inflames the cold, makes the crooked straight, and the rough ways plain.' This, be it observed, is no doctrine of human devising: "THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD." It is the LORD GOD who teaches the necessity of spiritual influence: it is the LORD GOD who bids his servant say, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." Let none, then, fear to call upon "the Lord the Spirit," as if it were derogatory to the Father's glory, or to the Saviour's honour, to *pray to the Holy Ghost*. The Church of England directly and repeatedly addresses the *Spirit* in prayer, and therefore surely fault cannot justly be found with those of her Ministers who implore his aid, and pray him to make his word effectual to the regeneration and salvation of their people. 'Though we know not whence he comes or whither he goes—though we feel not his entrance or his exit, yet, *from the motion of our heart*, we understand that he is present.' And since the Holy Ghost is given to be "ever" with the Saviour's Church, and must ever, till the time of the restitution of all things, "be the

* Quoted by J. Milner, in his History of the Church of Christ, vol. iii, from the Homilies of the First Gregory. See also in the same vol. page 406, a very beautiful extract from Bernard's 74th sermon.

Spirit of Promise," how should we be stimulated to pray for his new-creating influences! how importunately should we cry, Come, O Breath! how should we "put Jehovah in remembrance" of his own command, and pray him, by his omnipresent, all-pervading, and eternal Spirit, to breathe upon our slain that they may live!

To this, I hope, we shall feel encouraged when we notice the *result* of Ezekiel's labours. "So I prophesied, says he, as he commanded me, and the Breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." Wonderful result of Ministerial labour this! But why should we call it wonderful? Cannot he who first formed man of the dust, and breathed into him the breath of life, easily cause him to live anew? The prophet's hope of Israel's restoration was now confirmed. In vision he already saw them freed from their bondage, and restored again to existence as a nation. Their harps were resumed. The Lord's song was sung not now in a strange land. Zion once more reared her drooping head, and the Lord had a people in Israel. And do we not see the same or similar effects resulting from the same cause amongst ourselves? Where "the word comes in the Holy Ghost and with power," are not the dead revived? Again do "the lame walk and the blind receive their sight; *the dead are raised,*" and immortal souls are saved. The Spirit broods over the universal void, and reduces all things to order, harmony, and beauty.[t] 'From the expulsion of vices, and the suppression of carnal affections, we perceive the strength of his power: from the discernment and the conviction of the very intents of our heart, we may admire the depth of his wisdom: from some little improvement in our temper and conduct, we experience the goodness of his grace: from the renovation of our inward

[t] Gen i, 2. original.

man, we may perceive the comeliness of his beauty: and from the joint contemplation of all these things, we should tremble at his majestic greatness.' "Trembling may at first make our bones to shake;"[v] our bones may be waxen old or even consumed;[w] but when the Lord brings us up out of our grave, (as he promised to bring his Israel, Ezek. xxxvii, 13,) we greatly, nobly, live: life assumes a reality unfelt before: we remain no longer "strangers and aliens," but become "fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." The joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears, the temptations and consolations of the Lord's people become familiar to us. We triumph in Christ, our "resurrection and our life." We "stand (raised up upon our feet by the Spirit which raised Jesus our Lord from the dead) fast in the liberty" wherewith we have been freed. In duty, we feel a liveliness we never felt before. Our feet move with cheerful willingness obedient to the will of God. Our baptismal vows cease to be unmeaning sound. Gladly do we perceive the banner of love[x] to wave over us: putting on "the whole armour of God," gladly do we swell the ranks of the armies of the true Israel, and gladly now would we "spend and be spent" in the service of a crucified Jesus. Such is the effect resulting from the Spirit's influence on the mind of sinful man! such the delightful consequence of ministerial labour when wrought "not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power!"

We have now noticed the several things narrated in our text—the *valley*; the *bones* scattered so abundantly over it; the Lord's *inquiry* respecting them; the prophet's *answer* to it; the *direction* given him how to act; his *observance* of it; a *further direction*; and the *result* of all his labours;—and I would, in closing, only SAY,

iv, 14 [v] Sam. xxxi, 10, xxxii, 3 [x] Cant. ii, 4

See here a picture of your natural state, and the means whereby alone your state can be bettered and improved. Ye are morally and spiritually dead—"dry, very dry." Quicken yourselves ye cannot. "No man hath quickened his own soul." The Lord God and his Spirit alone can re-organize and exalt to their proper and legitimate use your powers and faculties. He works by *means*—means he hath devised that his banished ones be not for ever expelled from him.[y] "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by *the Word* of God."[z] Then, "O ye dry bones, HEAR *the Word of the Lord.*" Attend with diligence the ministration of it. A Minister (as one once said) may *pray* at home, but he cannot *preach* at home. Beware how ye neglect the preaching of the Word. And while we "prophecy upon you," join us when we cry, "Come, O Breath!" Only observe what a continual reference there is in all our services to the Holy Spirit's agency. Beware of the glaring (I had almost said, the stupid) inconsistency of such as boast of their membership with us, and yet dare to treat our mention of the Spirit's agency with contempt. Be ye consistent. *Mean* your prayers as well as *say* them. So will the Lord revive us. In his own good time will he raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. We shall come to the Mount Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon our head; we shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

[y] 2 Sam. xiv, 14. [z] Rom. x, 17.

DISCOURSE VIII.

FAITH AND UNBELIEF IN THE SON OF GOD; WITH THEIR CONSEQUENCES.

JOHN iii, 36.

He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but, the wrath of God abideth on him.

THE separation of the soul from the body is *temporal* death; the approach of which is usually marked by failure of strength, painful weariness, increasing debility: the separation of both body and soul from the Divine favour and influence in this world is *spiritual* death; the usual symptoms of which are, ignorance of God, contempt of his Word, worldliness of mind, carelessness about the soul and the soul's salvation: the separation of the whole man from the Divine presence and glory in the world to come is *eternal* death; the ills of which, we believe, are, hope destroyed, despair possessed, desire insatiable that can never be gratified, a sensibility of sin that proves a poisonous arrow in the very heart of existence, woe unutterable and irremediable. Hence, you see, there are three kinds of death—*temporal, spiritual,* and *eternal.* To all these kinds of death, Adam and all his descendants in him became

liable by eating the forbidden fruit. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and *so* death passed upon all men, for all have sinned."[a] Whether but for sin, we should have died at all, or been subject to any kind of death, we can hardly say; probably, I think, not: for, together with "the Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil," there grew in the midst of the garden "the Tree of Life," the fruit of which, when Man was fallen, was guarded, "*lest* he should put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat and live for ever."[b] Besides, the threatened penalty of transgression was death: "in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."[c] The *bodily* life, indeed, of Man was spared; he did not immediately return to the dust from whence he was taken: but Man died *spiritually*, and in the very day he ate of the Tree of knowledge of Good and Evil, the symptoms of spiritual death were at once perceivable in apostate Adam. He shunned his Creator's presence; a shame unfelt before suffused his countenance; a disposition to extenuate the sinfulness of sin and to exonerate self, prevailed within him; impiously did he reflect upon his kind and beneficent Creator relative to Eve as if she had not been "an help meet for him"—all which proves how truly Adam had ceased to be "*alive unto God.*" Die he did spiritually, and die eternally he would have done but for "the seed" in whom himself and all the families of the earth should be blessed. And "in Adam *all* die,"[d] The portrait of his every son and daughter may be seen in Ezekiel xvi. and Romans 1. We have no wish to aggravate the evils of fallen human nature or disgustingly to pourtray them; but from the records of inspiration it appears too surely true that "Man is *very far*, if not rather *as far as possible*, gone from original righteousness, and

[a] Rom. v, 12 [b] Gen. iii, 22 [c] Gen. ii, 17 [d] 1 Cor. v, 22

is, of his own nature, corrupt and inclined to evil;"[e] "*alienated* from the life of God," and "*dead* in trespasses and sins."[f] Now, in such a case, if the high and lofty One should deign at all to notice us, it would be, we might reasonably have supposed, "to appoint us unto wrath," and to give us up a prey to 'the bitter pains of eternal death:' but, no! (and here "behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us,"—how free, how rich, how merciful!) "God hath *not* appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."[g] Satan, the thief, came to kill and to destroy: Jesus came that we might have life, and have it in a richer and a more abundant measure than ever life was possessed or enjoyed by man before.[h] Hence the life we lost in Adam is restored in Christ: and now "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;* and *he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.*"

In these words we see—both the happy consequence of believing on the Son of God, and the unhappy consequence of not believing on him.

Let us consider

I. *The happy consequence of believing on the Son of God.*

And *what* is the happy consequence of believing on the Son of God? It is—"*Life, everlasting life,*" to the believing soul. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."[i] Here our Lord Jesus Christ is presented to us in a point of view in which, I conceive, we too seldom consider him; namely, as the Head or Representative of his people. That he is our federal Head, in whom we are represented, is clear from Rom. v. 18. 19. and from all those various Scrip-

[e] Art. 9 [f] Eph. ii, 1-and iv, 18 [g] 1 Thess. v, 9
[h] John x, 10 [i] 1 Cor. xv, 22

tures which speak of our being "circumcised in Christ;" "crucified in him;" "buried with him;" "risen with him;" "found in him;" "accepted in him;" and "seated in Heavenly places with him." This we can only be but as as being represented in him, and as being also interested in him by a true and lively faith. What Adam was, we were; what he did, we did. What Christ is, believers are, and their's is the plenteous redemption that is with him. 'He is the God which of his own mercy saveth us, and setteth out his charity and exceeding love towards us, in that of his own voluntary goodness; when we were perished, he saved us, and provided an everlasting kingdom for us.'[k] "The first man was of the earth, earthy; the second man is of the Lord from Heaven. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly."[l] Adam we may call *our death:* Opposed to him; Christ is "*our life.*"[m] "God hath given to his Son to have life in himself,"[n] and as having life in himself he is "the head" of all influence and the source of all spiritual existence to his people.[o] We "through grace believe" in him.[p] Faith interests us in Jesus. The believer's union with him is of a vital influential kind: and "he that believeth on the Son hath life"—hath life in his *Redeemer,* in *himself,* in *promise,* and in *prospect.* He hath life in his *Redeemer:* "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."[q] God gave us life in Adam; this we lost: He gave us life again, and to secure the gift to his believing children, He gave it—not directly to us, but to us *in his Son.* Hence is Christ 'the life of them that believe, and the resurrection from the dead.' The believer, too, has life in *himself.* Once he was as dead as others that are still buried in the

[k] Homily on Mis. of Mank. [l] 1 Cor. xv, 47–49
[m] Col. iii, 4 [n] John v, 25 [o] Col. i, 18
[p] Acts xv, 11 [q] 1 John v, 11.

cares and businesses and pleasures of the world: now he lives. The Spirit of the Lord hath breathed upon him. He has heard the voice of the Son of God. He is alive from the dead. He feels other desires than he once felt: enjoys other things than he once enjoyed. He now no longer lives or wishes to live without God in the world. He becomes concerned for his own soul and for the souls of others. Frequent and earnest enquiries about "the way, and the truth, and the life" stir within him. The followers of Jesus are in his judgment "the excellent of the earth." To them his "goodness extendeth." With them he "takes sweet counsel." The life he *now* lives in the flesh is by faith upon the Son of God. He is a lively branch in the living vine,—a lively stone in the living Temple.[r] This life is both derived from Jesus Christ, and maintained by faith in him. The believer's resources are not in or from himself: "His fresh springs" are in his Lord, and "out of his fulness do we all receive." Such an one hath, moreover, life in *promise*. "He that believeth shall be saved."[s] "I give," says the Good Shepherd, "unto my sheep, eternal life, and they shall never perish."[t] And again, "Whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die,"[v] "Exceeding great and precious promises" are these to the believer. They are "the rod and staff" of his mind whilst passing through the wilderness to Canaan. Amidst his conflicts and his failures, the pulse of his spiritual life sometimes beats feebly: the promise of life,—continued and increasing life, by Jesus Christ, supports him. Sweeter sound than music knows dwells in the Word, "He that believeth shall not come into condemnation."[w] Cannot He who kindles the spark of spiritual life, keep it alive even amidst an ocean of natural corruption? Shall the promise of a faithful God be

[r] John xv, 1–1 Pet. ii, 4–5 [s] Mark xvi, 16
[t] John x, 26 [v] John xi, 26 [w] John v, 24

otherwise than faithful? Truly, "the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed: but my kindness, O believer, shall not depart from thee, neither shall the Covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."[x] And if so, may we not with propriety say, the believer hath life in *prospect?* Yes: "he that believeth on the Son hath *everlasting* life." In a Paradise, fairer and more beautiful than that of Eden, will the believer live: and live, not as he may do now, a period of three or four score years, but through everlasting ages; and not, as now, compassed with infirmity, oppressed with care, and liable to temporal disease and death, but free, fully and entirely free, from sin, and therefore fully and entirely free from sorrow, suffering, pain, and death. All the felicities of a world of glory will he enjoy. Because his Redeemer lives, he shall live also, yea, and shall live on with him for ever. The every known, conceivable, or possible good of the Redeemer's everlasting kingdom will form the everlasting heritage of the redeemed. Death will be "swallowed up in victory." Death temporal, death spiritual, death eternal, there shall be no more.[y] The Grave itself shall be spoiled of its possessions Every "friend" of Jesus "shall rise again." At his bidding "the Earth shall cast out her dead and shall no more cover her slain." The soul of the believer, purified and exalted in all her powers and faculties, shall re-occupy her once sinful, frail, and perishable, but now re-organized and glorified tenement, and in the immediate vision of her Lord shall live for ever.

Such will be the happy consequence of believing in the Son of God.

Let us now consider

II. *The unhappy consequence of not believing on him.*

Our text tell us—and a most solemn declaration it

[x] Isa liv, 10 [y] Rev xxi 4

is—"*he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*" Here it is implied, that an unbeliever is spiritually dead; and continuing in an unbelieving state, it is declared that he shall not see life. All those Scriptures which speak of our being "quickened," "born again," "begotten anew," and the like, imply a state of previous death. This state characterizes every man by Nature: and it is only by the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit that any are raised from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness. There is no impossibility opposing our becoming acquainted with our state. "Judge your own selves." Which do you affect most, Self or God? Which do you prefer, God's glory or your own? Whose will do you choose most readily to do, the Lord's or your own? Which are dearest to you, the interests and connexions of Time, or those of Eternity? With whom is your sweetest communion held, with your Saviour or another? Whose Plan of Salvation is most congenial to your wishes, the Almighty's or your own? When feel you the most lively, when conversant with things seen and temporal, or with things not seen, as yet, and eternal?—Judge ye: for where a Man affects self, and is gratified with human praise; does his own pleasure without regard to the will and word of God; is careful only about what he shall eat and what he shall drink, and wherewithal he shall be clothed; knows nothing of communion with Christ; quarrels with the holy humbling salvation of the Gospel, and minds earthly things to the neglect of heavenly—that Man most certainly sits in darkness, and dwells in the region of the shadow of death. Between him and one *naturally* dead, there is a near resemblance. Bring one naturally dead into the splendour of noon-day brightness; he perceives not its light nor feels its warmth: offer him the most fragrant odours; he has no capacity to enjoy their fragrancy: tend to his ac-

ceptance gifts of the most rare and costly kind; he accepts them not: and why? simply because he is dead, and therefore has no eye to see, no faculty to smell, no hand to receive. And now bring one *spiritually* dead into "the light of the glorious Gospel of God;" he neither sees nor feels it. Jesus is come a Light into the World—is risen as the sun of righteousness in our moral and intellectual heaven,—and yet men love darkness rather than light, and that because their nature and its deeds are evil. Tell the unregenerate sinner of that "Name which is as ointment poured forth;" nothing of all you say will cheer, revive, and comfort him. Offer him "durable riches and righteousness"—the joys of faith and the rewards of grace; he will have no hand, no heart, to accept them: and why? simply because he is dead and has no gracious taste, no spiritual discernment.[z] Nor has any one who is destitute of the Spirit of Christ this gracious taste and spiritual discernment. People may have "a name to live," but "a *name* to live" is not life. They may nominally be in Christ and so far be Christian, but unless they be really and practically united to him, they are none other than false and fruitless branches in the true and living vine. Whilst a Man has no life in *himself*, we cannot say that he has life in *the Son of God*: In *promise*, certainly, there is no life for an unbeliever, and therefore there can be none in *prospect*. Life we had in the first Adam, and that we lost: Life we may have in the second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven, and in no other whatever. There is no third Adam in whom we may have life. He, then, that believeth not the Son, does not, cannot, *shall not*, (says the Baptist) see life. The Holy Spirit (as a Master in our Israel justly remarks) is the *animating Soul* of that Body of which Jesus Christ is the exalted head. Where his influence is unfelt, there must be death, and

[z] 1 Cor ii, 14, and Eph iv, 17–19

where this death prevails, "the wrath of God abideth:" it is the breath of the blast of His displeasure which scours the land of spiritual desolation. The wrath of God, it is said, *abideth* on the unbeliever: now to *abide* it must be already on him. Shall we, then, be thought uncharitable or needlessly severe, if we say, "*He that believeth not* is *condemned already*!"[a] Shall we be deemed your enemies because we tell you the truth? If we say "God is angry with the wicked every day;" saith not the Scripture this?[b] Solemn as is the fact, "*the wrath of God*" is upon every unregenerate sinner. And though this expression applies, perhaps, primarily to those Jews who refused to acknowledge their Messiah in our Jesus, and to those Gentiles who despised and rejected him; yet is it equally applicable to all persons in all ages who "*believe not on the Son* of God." He alone that hath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son hath not life: but the wrath of a holy and a justly offended God lieth on him. "Destruction and misery are in his ways, and the way of peace he knows not.' Affecting "the honour which cometh of man," he has in it his reward. Walking by sight, invisible realities he perceives not. In love with self, he loves not the Lord. Self-complacent, he sees not the glory of a free salvation. Alive only to this world, he does but live in it to treasure up for himself wrath in another. Wrath awaits him, and death in its threefold form—its temporal pains, its spiritual maladies, and its eternal horrors, must he suffer. The "*shall not*" of our text is irreversible, and such will be the unhappy consequence of not believing on the Son of God.

And are these things so? Then SEE

1. *What is the great and condemning sin of the world.* It is not murder; it is not theft; it is not lying, per-

[a] John iii, 18 [b] Ps 7-11

jury, blasphemy, or sabbath-breaking; it is not one or all of these things together: it is a sin comprehending all other sins—it is UNBELIEF. A man may be no murderer, no thief, no liar, no blasphemer, no sabbath-breaker; and yet he may not believe on the Son of God, and, consequently, be exposed to that terrific sentence, "*He that believeth not shall be damned.*"[c] If a man truly believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, he will love him: and if any man, says Paul, *love him not, let him be Anathema Maran-atha*, that is, *accursed.*[d] These are truly strong expressions: but they were dictated by One too wise to err and too good to deceive. In Rev. xxi, 8, we find "*the unbelieving*" classed with "murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolators, and liars;" and these together (it is declared) "shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." Awful doom! but no less just than awful. For unbelief makes the God of truth a liar, and sets at nought his counsel; tramples on a Saviour's blood, and scorns his sorrows, woes, and death; does despite to the Spirit of grace; counts vain the piety and visionary the hope of the believer; countenances and encourages the wickedness of the worldly and presumptuous sinner; bars up, in short, the everlasting doors of Heaven, and wide unfolds the gates of the infernal prison. Unbelief is the grief of Heaven and the joy (if aught like joy be there) of Hell. And yet how few, comparatively, believe on the Son of God! It is, we know, too common to conclude that most or all who name the Name of Christ are believers: but "*all men have not faith:*" had they, it would endear to them the Saviour, and be influential on their heart and life. Were it possible for us to prove that our Jesus never existed, and that his Gospel was "a cunningly-devised fable," no alteration either in the sentiments or the

[c] Mark xvi, 16 [d] 1 Cor xvi, 22

conduct of the generality of his professed followers would ensue: a decisive evidence in favour of our position that *unbelief* is the great and condemning sin of the world. And should the public teachers of religion be silent on this momentous topic? and least of all the teachers of a Church which so accurately and repeatedly insists upon the subject?* With the courage and intrepidity of the Baptist should we solemnly declare;—"He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

But see

2. *What really is the Faith of the Believer.* 'The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (I quote the words of one before alluded to) quickens the dead in sin: thus they are made alive to God, and by this uniting cause and agent they become spiritually one with Christ' and live by his life. "*Of him* are we in Christ," and *by him* faith is wrought in our heart, and by faith we appropriate Jesus to our use as "made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." This faith is carefully to be distinguished from the dead inoperative faith which prevails in the world, and which James describes in the second chapter of his General Epistle. It is wrought in the heart "of, or rather *by*, the operation of God" It is lively, vigorous, and influential—"moved," as our Reformers say, through continual assistance of the Holy Spirit, to serve and please God, to keep his favour, to fear his displeasure, to continue his obedient children, shewing thankfulness again by observing or keeping his Commandments, and that freely, for true love chiefly, and not for dread of punishment or love of temporal reward, considering how clearly, without our deserv-

* See our XVIII and XXIX Articles.

ings, we have received his mercy and pardon freely." The Son of God is the one great object of our faith: The just, or justified, live by faith upon him. Like St. Paul, the believer "dies daily" to self, the world, and sin; and lives increasingly unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. "The soul that has this lively faith, will be always doing some good work, which shall declare it to be living, and will not be unoccupied." "Our trust is in God's mercy through Jesus Christ, and we have a stedfast hope of all good things to be received through him." 'The truths of revelation we cordially receive, not merely *as true*, but as *holy, just, suitable,* and *valuable*:' we love them; delight in them; live upon them. Christ is our "ALL:" "all things we count loss" for him: take him from us, and you extinguish the sun of our system, you destroy the very source and centre of all our blessedness. "We have *life* through his Name," and "though now we *see* him not, yet *believing* in him, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." We never truly lived, till we were quickened by the power of God:[f] and the life we now live in the flesh, we live by faith on Him who loved us and gave himself for us.—Such is the language of the true and really Christian Believer, and from it you may see how totally different is the faith of one "alive unto God through Jesus Christ" from that cold, heartless, and uninfluential assent of the many to the Truth of Scripture.*

And now see, 3, *Who alone are secure from the Divine displeasure.* And who are they? Let me ask, who alone were secure when "the windows of Heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were

* The reader is particularly desired to read our *Homily on Faith.*

[f] Eph. ii, 1.

broken up," and a deluge of water covered the highest hills and mountains of the Earth? You know that only Noah and those who were with him in the Ark were secure. And who of all mankind shall be secure in "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God?"—the day when "the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth with all that is therein shall be burned up?" Who? my brethren: Why, those only that are found in Christ—those only who believe with their *heart* on the Son of God. This we could prove to you from many Scriptures, but let one, in addition to our text, suffice: Turn to Acts iv, 10—12, and you will read, "By the Name of *Jesus Christ*—even by *him*, may we be saved: Neither is there Salvation in *any* other: for there is *none* other Name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Settle it, therefore, in your minds, and be it a matter of undoubted certainty with you, that unbelief in Christ will subject and expose the unbeliever to the wrath of God, and that those only will be screened from righteous retribution who believe on the Son and are alive in him.

But see, 4, and finally, *How we may escape that wrath.* The Lord shut Noah in the Ark: the Lord shuts us up in Christ.[g] Christ is "the Refuge from the storm"—"the Hope set before us:" To this let us flee, and in him we shall dwell safely. But you have no faith, you fear, and you cannot believe: Well, only cry, "Lord I *would* believe, *help thou my unbelief*," and the Lord will not despise your cry. "*Call upon me*," is his command; "*and thou shalt praise me*," he adds, to encourage your so doing. Faith is his gift;[h] "*ask and ye shall receive.*"[i] The sword

[g] Gen. vii, 16. Gal. iii, 23. [h] Eph. ii, 8.
[i] Matt. vii, 7.

which pierced your Lord shall not awake against you.* If ye do truly desire to "flee from the wrath to come," "the Spirit which raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, hath quickened you;" life ye already have in its beginnings, and life everlasting shall ye have by faith on the Son of God.

* Zech. xiii. 7.

DISCOURSE IX.

THE BELIEVER'S REFUGE.

PHILLIPPIANS iii, 8 and 9.

——*That I may win Christ and be found in him.*

THERE is scarcely one of the Inspired Writers but may truly say with Hosea, "I have used similitudes." Similitudes or figures of every varied kind, they use in their illustrations of things spiritual and heavenly. If the Canaan of Promise be described as "the glory of all lands" and as "flowing with milk and honey," it affords a resemblance, however faint, of that "better country" to which Abraham and his believing seed had "respect," and where flow "rivers of pleasures for evermore." If the Lord of that better country be compared to "the Sun shining in his strength;" it is because He is 'the Sun and centre of all minds'—the source of light and life and glory to both his unfallen and redeemed creatures. If the Church, either militant or triumphant, be likened to the more sombre Moon, how forcibly does the similitude imply that—however brightly she may shine, she shines but with borrowed brightness, and is indebted to her Lord, "the Sun of righteousness," for all her excellence. Whilst on his heavenward-way, how fitly may the Christian be

called "a stranger and a pilgrim!" and whilst exposed to winds and storms of trial, how befitting his condition is a—Refuge! This seemingly is the figure used by Paul in our text:—"*that I may win Christ and be found in him.*" He had, he tells us, (see preceding context) sheltered in fleshly confidence; the privileges of a Jew; the formality of a Pharisee; the righteousness of the Law; prejudiced and infatuated zeal against serious godliness, and all the arrant pride of an unhumbled and a blinded heart: but, he had found all these things severally and together no better than "a bowing wall and a tottering fence."[a] They were, at best, a poor shelter for his soul. Awakened now from the dreams of carnal ignorance, Paul felt the worthlessness of all his fancied excellencies. These, though once, as he supposed, a "gain" to him, he now counted "loss for Christ." "Yea, doubtless," he adds, "and I count (on the most mature and calm consideration) all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord; for whom (or for whose sake) I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, *that I may win Christ and be found in him.*"

Let us contemplate

I. The Believer's Refuge,
And II. His Safety in it.

And I. *The Believer's* REFUGE:

We mean by the *Believer,* one that has been convinced of sin; humbled in spirit; shewn his helplessness; led to acquiesce in the just judgment of a holy God, and to allow that he might for ever justly be condemned for his transgressions of the Law; shewn, too, the necessity of other merits than his own to justify him, and constrained from a sense of the Divine favour

[a] Ps. 62-3

and from a principle of love which the Spirit of love alone can inspire, cheerfully and gratefully, in heart and deed, to walk obediently in "all the will of God:"—we mean by the Believer's *Refuge*, *that* in which his soul finds rest, security, and peace. Now, in order to see more evidently the superior excellence of the Believer's Refuge, it will be well to examine the refuges in which, unhappily, many choose to shelter rather than be found in Christ. Isaiah speaks of "refuges of lies:"[b] these are many and various; some few of them we shall notice.

There is the refuge of *wilful ignorance*. 'We are no scholars,' say many; 'we never had any learning.' Allowing they were never favoured with the means of knowlege, and are consequently no scholars: do they wish to know better; use they diligence in the use of the means which they may command? No: generally speaking, they do not. Their pretended ignorance (for, in truth, they will commonly be found "wise in *their own eyes*, and prudent in *their own conceits*,") is a mere excuse for negligence and indifference. In this, however, they ignorantly trust, and foolishly imagine themselves to be secure. But it is a lying refuge. Wilful ignorance cannot screen the soul in the day of its visitation. The "one" talent must be accounted for as well as the "five" talents and the "two." The "wisdom of this world" does not "make wise unto salvation," nor is it essentially necessary to our "knowing God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." We may be Christians without being scholars.

There is again the refuge of *carnal ease*. Many people live as if the body alone were to be provided for, and its indulgence constituted the sum total of their enjoyment. For *that* they will "rise early and late

[b] Ch. xxviii, 17.

take rest." So that their "corn and wine and oil increase" and the temporal wants of themselves and their families be supplied, they are little concerned about "treasures in heaven" or provisions for their deathless souls. I mean not to say that a man ought not even carefully to "provide for those of his own house;" did he not he would be "worse than an infidel:" but I do say that the ease in which many pass the days of the years of their earthly pilgrimage, is ruinous to the peace and eternal interests of their souls. They cry "Peace, when there is no peace." Their peace is like that deadly stillness which those who have sailed some distant seas, inform us always precedes a ruinous and destructive storm. "Soul," say they, "take thine ease:" but "when they say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them." "Tremble, then, ye that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones,"[c] for your state ill comports with the watchful care, the prayerful diligence, the laborious love, the patient hope, of a Child of grace. The refuge of carnal ease shall be proved a lie.

But others shelter themselves in *worldly pleasure*. This is the refuge of the many, and particularly of Youth. They are athirst for happiness: forsaking "the Fountain of living waters," they endeavour to satiate their desires at the polluted streams of sensual mirth. They deem Religion a source of gloomy care and melancholy sadness. The sober joy, the believing hope, the tender seriousness, of the Christian, is, in their view, any thing but pleasurable and desirable. But pleasure, of whatever kind it be, unblessed with the presence and the smile of a "reconciled Father in Christ," is vain and delusive. It may seem a flower to be innocently gathered on our way through life; but it conceals a thorn. It may seem a refuge fair and

[c] Isaiah xxxii, 11.

beautiful to behold, but it is a refuge bordering close on wretchedness and woe. "Who hath woe?" asks Solomon: "who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of the eyes? They," he answers, "that tarry long at the wine."[d] And "woe unto them that laugh now," says a greater than Solomon, "for ye shall mourn and weep."[e] And "she that liveth in pleasure," adds an Apostle of Jesus Christ, "is dead while she liveth."[f] Surely, then, the pleasure in which so many live, which hath a "woe" appended to it, and which shall issue in fruitlesss mourning and weeping, can be no safe refuge for a man's immortal soul.

There are, too, refuges of a still more deceitful kind than those we have already noticed. There is one which, from the peculiarity of its nature, we may denominate the sinner's "stronghold"—I mean, *self-righteousness.* Nothing has the Minister of Christ so much to contend with in his people as a disposition to seek, to affect, to approve and justify *self.* Self is man's golden god. Even after we are regenerate, this corrupt propensity of our nature doth remain. Selfishness prevails in all we do or think or say. But it is the allowance and indulgence of it that endangers the soul's security. When men are "whole and need not a Physician," the Physician's skill will not be valued. When men are satisfied in and with and from themselves, there will be no desire to "win Christ and be found in him." And such as are so, are "blind;" they feed "on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned them aside; so that they cannot deliver their souls, or say, Is there not a lie in our right hand?"[g] This self-complacency it is Satan's great endeavour to induce, because he knows full well its mischievous effects, and

[d] Prov. xxiii, 29–30 [e] Luke vi, 25 [f] I Tim. v, 6
[g] Isa. xliv, 20

how certainly "God resisteth the proud and beholdeth them afar off." The refuge of multitudes, alas! it is: but like every other refuge of man's devising, it will be found "a house builded on the sand" and whose ruin must inevitably be "great."

One other refuge we shall notice ere we contemplate that of the believer's—a *false profession of religion.* Some persons, we believe, deem a profession of religion becoming or respectable. Some have sinister and worldly ends to answer by becoming professedly religious: others again would ingratiate themselves with their minister, and be gratified to be reputed for their piety. Hence the garb of piety is assumed: the language of religion is acquired, and the "*I am holier than thou*" of the Pharisee, is seen depicted in their whole deportment. This is their refuge. But follow them into their families; go with them into their closets, and what may you see? You may see all the unholy tempers, angry looks, and sinful negligences of the natural man. Now could a "a good tree bring forth corrupt fruit?" Their profession is unsound. They are "men-pleasers." Their religion is not the religion of the Holy Ghost, nor is their faith the faith of the Redeemer's people. They make them, indeed, a wall; but they "daub it with untempered mortar."[h] And as a poor mud-walled cottage can ill endure the rains and winds of Winter, so no more will a false profession of religion endure the righteous scrutiny of God, or the fiery trial of the Judgment Day.

And now opposed to the foregoing "refuges of lies" is the Believer's Refuge. And what is it? It is CHRIST—*Christ* in his person, *Christ* in his love, *Christ* in his birth, life, work, death, resurrection, ascension, session at the right-hand of his eternal Father, and his mediatorial office there: "that I may win *Christ*," says

[h] Ezek. xiii, 11

St. Paul, "and be found in him." Winning Christ and being found in him must doubtless mean somewhat more than a mere knowledge and profession of Christianity. We believe many to know and profess the truth of the Gospel who yet manifestly feel nothing of its humbling, cheering, hallowing tendency: otherwise, why do we pray (as *we* are wont to do) that they may be led into it? The very expressions to "win Christ" and be "found in him," imply a way-worn weary traveller's earnest wish to find repose. "It is written in the Prophets, All the Redeemer's children shall be taught of God;" (See Isa. liv. 13, Mic. iv. 2.) and there is *no man* "that hath heard and learned of the Father, but cometh unto" Christ.[i] In all times and places, Christ has been the refuge of every Heaven-born and Heaven-directed soul. This the whole inspired volume testifies. To Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, was Jesus Christ the promised "Seed." These all died in the faith of Christ, and found rest to their souls in him.[k] "Strangers and pilgrims" here; they sought another and a Heavenly country: and as they journeyed through the wastes of time, their faith became to them "the Substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Describing the glory of Emmanuel, Isaiah says, "Behold a King shall reign in righteousness, and Princes shall rule in judgment; and A MAN shall be as an hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."[l] And lest we should be mistaken in our refuge, and put that confidence in a creature which the high and lofty One claims as his exclusive homage, the Prophet declares this refuge from the storm, this shadow from the heat, to be—GOD, JEHOVAH, LORD

[i] John vi, 45 [k] Heb. xi, 13 [l] Ch. xxxii, 1–2

OF HOSTS.[m] Amos also writes, "*The* LORD *is the hope of his people:*"[n] that is, if you will observe the marginal reading of our larger Bibles, "JEHOVAH *is the place of repair or harbour*" of his believing Israel. Then is the Believer's Refuge both God and Man—'perfect God and perfect Man; of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting: equal to the Father as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood: Who, although he be God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ;' and as "the Christ of God, full of grace and truth," he is "the strong tower of defence," "the quiet habitation and the sure resting place" of every one that really believes in him. "By two immutable things (His oath and promise) in which it was impossible for God to lie, we have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the Hope set before us in the Gospel."[o] As under the Jewish Dispensation, one fearful and apprehensive of danger, "laid hold on the horns of the altar,"[p] so under the dispensation of the Gospel, the alarmed and guilty sinner lays hold on Him whom the altar typified and finds in Christ a refuge from all he deserves and dreads. NOT (let me observe) that even Christ, in all the exalted nature of his person and all the excellence of his mediatorial work, is usually the *first* refuge to which a regenerate sinner will resort. No: such is the unholy propensity and disposition of our fallen nature, that we commonly fly to our tears, repentances, prayers, duties, or any thing for refuge from apprehended wrath rather than to Jesus Christ. But these, equally with wilful ignorance, carnal ease, worldly pleasure, self-righteousness, and mere profession, are ultimately found to be insecure and unkindly refuges. There is no place in them

[m] Is. xxv, 1–4 [n] Ch. iv, 16 [o] Heb. vi, 18
[p] 1 Kings ii, 28

whereon the foot of hope may rest. The gracious "Testifier of Jesus" leads whom He teaches to see and feel that 'other Refuge there is none' save Jesus and him crucified—Jesus and him alive again—Jesus and him "*over all* God *blessed for ever.*"[q] Weary, at length, of "going about to establish his own righteousness," the Believer learns meekly and gratefully to submit to the righteousness of the incarnate God.[r] Self, indeed, still lives; but he "that is Christ's hath crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts;" and though not quite dead, it is dying. The Christian *allows* not boasting: he would that every lofty imagination within him were brought low, and would willingly be nothing for Christ to be "all in all." Foregoing every other ground of confidence, the language of his heart is—"*That I may win Christ:* too long have I stopped short of him: too long have I been resting in "lying vanities"—hovering in uncertainty and doubt at a distance from my Saviour-God, as if he were unable or unwilling to befriend and succour me; but now I perceive his graciousness and view his loveliness. O, let me win him and be found in him! Jesus invites the weary and heavy-laden to him; a weary heavy-laden soul is mine, and therefore, Lord, "I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee in a barren and a dry land where no water is."[s]

Thus, "the Munition of rocks" becomes the Believer's strength and salvation. He wins Christ and is found in him. What are the great and peculiar excellencies of his Refuge, we cannot, in our present state of imperfect being, adequately conceive: One that had been caught up into the third Heaven, and been taught the Truth by immediate revelation from Jesus Christ himself, declares them to be "unsearchable."[t] His Name is "Wonderful" and

[q] Rom. ix, 5.
[r] Rom. x, 3.
[s] Ps. 143, 6.
[t] Eph. iii, 8.

wonderful are all his works and ways. Uncreated glory he inherits. Knowledge and power are his in infinite degrees. His kingdom is divinely spiritual, pure, and blissful. The every trembling penitent that applies to him in the day of his soul's humiliation, Jesus is "mighty to save." In short, "there is no end of his greatness;" and all which a sinner could wish to find in a Saviour may be found in him. Not that a Believer apprehends directly and at once all that for which he is apprehended of God in Christ Jesus: no; not so: this would be to exceed the experience even of Paul himself:[v] commonly, years of our spiritual life must elapse ere we can cordially and unhesitatingly "rejoice in Christ Jesus." Every child of God, however, will gradually be led to do so, and to the view of his enlightened understanding new discoveries of his Saviour's person, love, birth, death, and every thing will be made as he needs, and is able to bear them. Christ ever becomes, as Peter says, "precious," or rather *preciousness* itself, to "them that believe."[w] They would not but be "found in him" for ten thousand worlds. He is more to them than the city of refuge was to the man-slayer in Israel. You probably recollect that in the division of Canaan by Moses and Joshua, six cities were selected as cities of refuge for any one who killed his neighbour unawares and hated him not in time past.[x] The roads to these cities were required to be well kept up, and on posts by the way was written in characters so distinguishable that "whoso ran might read"—"*To your Refuge.*" Would, then, one of these six cities be dear as a refuge to the man-slayer? Infinitely dearer is Christ to any that are found in him. No avenger of blood may dare to touch one "accepted in the Beloved."[y] The *life* of "the

[v] Verse 12, of the Context. [w] 1 Peter 11, 7. [x] Num. xxxv.
[y] Eph. i, 6.

High Priest of our profession" secures the Believer from death: His *death* only procures him enlargement and freedom.[a] He wins more and more of Christ continually; is found dependant on Him more and more simply, and longs with all that 'spiritually eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, *to dwell in Christ*,' "not having his own righteousness, which is of the Law," for any ground of hope or personal safety, "but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Such is the Believer's Refuge: and from contemplating his *Refuge*, let us proceed to contemplate

II. *His* SAFETY *in it.*

When the Almighty "shall lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; when the hail shall sweep away the refuges of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-places" of human contrivance and worldly wisdom, the Believer's will be found "a *quiet* habitation and a *sure* resting place,"[a] Whilst ignorance, ease, self-love, worldly pleasure, and a mere name to live, crumble into the dust of shame and the ruin of despair, the Believer's Refuge will outbrave every trial, and be to him a safe retreat amidst even 'the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds.' Hath he enemies? They may *assail* his citadel, but they shall not *take* it: He is "kept (or *garrisoned*, as the original imports) by the power of God through faith unto salvation."[b] Are his enemies *mighty?* "He that dwelleth in the secret places of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the *All*-mighty."[c] Doth "this present evil *world*" allure him? Christ hath overcome the world, and by faith the Christian overcomes it too.[d] While passing through it and

[a] Jos. xx, 6. [a] Isa. xxxii, 18. [b] 1 Pet. i, 5.
[c] Ps. 91, 1. [d] John xvi, 33.

contending with it, the promise—"Whoso overcometh shall sit down with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne"—sounds sweetly in the Believer's ear.[e] It is commanded him "not to love the world nor the things of the world," and a SAVIOUR's commandment is not grievous.[f] "Fears within and fightings without," demand perpetual diligence and watchfulness: but "strong in the Lord," the believer wages a successful warfare, and the conqueror's palm and robe ever and anon cheer and animate his hopes.[g] Worldly cares of a necessary and lawful kind, it may be, frequently engage the attention and occupy the time of a good man: but 'These, will he say, are not my divinities.'[h] He will not bury himself in them, nor say, when disengaged from them, "What have I more?" He wants no tabernacle in a world the fashion of which passeth away. He has no *abiding* place below, and will ever feelingly be saying with Israel's sweet Psalmist—"Return unto thy rest, O my soul."[i]

Lusteth the *flesh* against the spirit? Doth the Believer feel—not merely the frailty, but—the depravity of his nature? He knows that "in Christ was no sin," and he has the promise of his Lord that "sin shall not have *dominion* over *him*."[k] 'Though this infection of nature doth remain even in them that are regenerate, yet is there no condemnation to them that believe and are baptized.'[l] The Believer is safe in his Refuge. In the pure and now glorified human nature of Jesus Christ, he sees what one day he himself shall be. Even now is his sin forgiven in its *guilt*, and destroying, if not perfectly destroyed, in its *power*. No Jebusite *allowedly* lives in the land, however obstinately he may retain his hold in it. In the atoning blood of

[e] Rev. iii, 21. [f] 1 John v, 3. [g] Rev. vii, 9.
[h] Jud. xviii, 42. [i] Ps. 116, 7. [k] Rom. vii. 14.
[l] Art. ix.

his Redeemer, the Believer has a "fountain for his sin and uncleanness" wherein he may daily and hourly wash;[m] and in his Redeemer, an Advocate to "bear the iniquity of his holy things."[n] Sometimes, perhaps, he "groans, being burdened:" he looks to his Lord and is lightened.[o] So severe, it may be, are sometimes the contentions between the opposing principles of flesh and spirit, that he can only breathe the sorrows of his heart in the "*O wretched man that I am*" of St. Paul.[p] "Who, asks the struggling Believer, shall deliver me from the body of sin and death?" He asks not in vain: the Spirit who groans unutterable requests within him, leaves him not comfortless, but enables him, perhaps in the moment of his greatest extremity, to say, "*I thank God who delivers me through Jesus Christ.*" Thus does he trinmph with thanksgiving in Christ," and shall "*always*" do so.[q] For God "GIVETH *us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"[r] "Believing," amidst all our remaining imperfections, "we rejoice—rejoice in hope—rejoice in hope of glory:" and our very conflicts with sin endear to us our hope, and add to the splendour of our brightening prospects. Sweet to the believer is the thought, 'I shall one day be likened to my glorious Lord and stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.'[s] *In Christ* is there "*Salvation with eternal glory.*"

But, doth *Satan* harras and perplex the believer? Hath he to "wrestle *not* with flesh and blood only, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness (or *wicked spirits*) in high places?[t] He knows that his Lord and Saviour was "tempted of the Devil," and that now from a fellow-feeling Jesus Christ is disposed to "succour them that are tempted."[v] The

[m] Zech. xiii, 1. [n] Exod. xxviii, 38. [o] Ps. 34, 5.
[p] Rom. vii, 24. [q] 2 Cor. ii, 14. [r] 1 Cor. xv, 57.
[s] Phil. iii, 21, [t] Eph. vi, 12. [v] Heb. ii, 18.

Devils are "subject unto Christ." They can do no more than Christ permits them. To him they crouch.[w] And soon may the believer expect the Angel that is to come down from Heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand, to bind that old serpent which is the Devil and Satan.[x] The saints in glory "overcame him by the blood of the Lamb;" by the same sure and unfailing means shall those who are yet maintaining the fight of faith, overcome him too. The armies of the Redeemer's Israel *must* triumph ultimately. Their GOD is their strength: and soon will He call them to put their feet upon the necks of their enemies, and award to them the glories of the heavenly Canaan. (See Joshua x. 24, 25).

But, whilst thus contending with the *world*, the *flesh*, and *Satan*, the Believer, possibly, becomes sometimes "weary in the greatness of his way." "LEST he be weary and faint in his mind," he is commanded to "look unto Jesus," and to "consider him that endured the cross."[y] Looking unto Jesus and considering *his* cross, the Christian's cross becomes easy and tolerable. If he "walks in darkness"—darkness so total that he has "no light," he is still privileged to "trust in the Name of the Lord" and to stay his sorrowing soul upon his God.[z] If he be perplexed or troubled about any affair of moment; ignorant how to act or unknowing what conduct to pursue: he may "commit his way unto the Lord," and if it be really conducive to his good, "the Lord will bring it to pass."[a] If, in a time he is not aware, the Believer be overtaken by some unthought-of calamity: "The Name of his Lord is a strong tower; he runneth into it and is safe."[b] The storms which well-nigh overwhelm others, scarcely affect him. "His heart standeth fast, trusting in the Lord." "No plague comes nigh his dwelling." He "dwells safely." Whilst

[w] Luke viii, 28. [x] Rev. xx, 1, 2. [y] Heb. xii, 2, 3.
[z] Isa. l, 10. [a] Ps. 37, 5. [b] Prov. xviii, 10.

other refuges are proved to be false and insecure, Jesus is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Whilst the many pass their days in time-consuming, soul-destroying follies, the Believer is satisfied with the fulness of Christ. A fulness of every good he finds in Jesus:—a fulness of mercy, a fulness of love, a fulness of strength, a fulness of life, a fulness of glory: and "out of his fulness do we all receive."[c] Here are rich "provisions by the way." By faith the Christian Pilgrim lives upon them. Still that he may "win Christ and be found in him" is his prevalent desire. He hastens by anticipation to the time when his soull shall be satiated with fatness and replenished with goodness, when he shall hunger no more neither thirst any more, and he shall be "*saved* IN THE LORD *with an everlasting salvation.*"[d]

Such, then, Beloved, is the Believer's Refuge, and His Safety in it. I would now, to all who believe among you, SAY, Abide in your Refuge, and Welcome others to it.

And 1. *Abide in your Refuge.* "*Abide in me,*" says Jesus Christ himself to his believing followers.[e] Unless the man-slayer abode within the appointed bounds of his refuge, he became exposed to the sword of the avenger. If then he valued his life and wished its preservation, he would surely suffer no trifling thing to induce him to wander from his retreat. Imitate the man-slayer in this particular: Abide in Christ. Nor deem our exhortation needless and unseasonable. If Man could be beguiled when innocent, much more may he be so when fallen and depraved. Now, "I fear, lest by any means, as the Serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so *your* minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."[f] Beware, then, of those things that will corrupt you, and make you other

[c] John 16. [d] Isa. xlv, 17. Rev. vii, 10. [e] John xv, 4.
[f] 2 Cor. xi, 3.

than simple, humble, holy, followers of Jesus Christ. Nature will be nature still, nor will "the flesh" be other than fleshly and carnal in its propensities, till the morning of the resurrection dawn upon the darkness of the tomb, and the body be built anew from the dust. Believers have especially to beware of slothful ease, watchless security, and spiritual pride. Even David was not exempt from these evils. "My mountain, said he, standeth strong; and I shall never be moved."[g] God hid his face from him and he was troubled. He said it, he tells us, in his "prosperity;" and it was his prosperity that injured his simplicity. Humbled, however, for his fault, David presently prays—"*In* THEE, *O Lord, do I put my trust: Be* THOU *my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.*"[h] "Let him, therefore, among *you*, that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Beware of every thing like presumptuous confidence. How experienced soever you may be, there will come no period in your life of faith, when you may conclude that you have attained all you may attain. Never will you spiritually exist without Christ and a believing union with him. Him you must daily win and in him be ever found. You came to him indeed only as you were drawn: You abide in him only as you are "preserved in him:"[i] nevertheless, this does not supersede the necessity of your "keeping *yourselves* in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life:"[k] Your Lord's command is—"Watch:" and we cannot think He would have enjoined watchfulness had there been no occasion for it. In watchfulness, therefore, and "in all things," be emulous to adorn the Doctrine of God your Saviour. Let us see that you are in Christ and partakers of his Spirit, by your fruits of righteousness. This is the test whereby your Christianity will be proved. For "he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a

[g] Ps. 30, 7. [h] Ps. 31, 1—2. [i] Jude 1. [k] Jude 21.

liar, and the truth is not in him.—But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: HEREBY *know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also* SO *to walk,* EVEN AS *he walked.*"[l] Then *abide* in your souls' dear refuge and beloved retreat, and thus evidence your abiding in him; so shall you say—"Unto thee, O my strength will I sing; for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy,"[m] and be prepared to

2. *Welcome others to your Refuge.* Our experience of the Divine goodness must be small and our enjoyment of the Divine favour weak and languid, if a fellow-sinner's penitence fills not our heart with joy and gladness. What! shall angels that never felt the sweetness of redeeming mercy look down from their high abode and watch with joyous gratulation the progress of a soul returning to its God; and we, the subjects of redemption, feel no or, at best, but a cold and thankless interest in an event so interesting? I have observed, and with sorrow, in persons whose piety we could not doubt, a shyness and a reserve towards others that had not, it might be, attained to their knowledge or to their love of the Truth, not at all to be commended.—O, it should not content us to be secure ourselves: our "desire and prayer for Israel should be that they may be saved:" and to our desire and prayer should be added endeavour to save them. With sacred gladness should you hail and bid "God speed" every one whom you see "enquiring his way to Zion with his face thither-ward." With Laban should you say, "*Come in thou blessed of the Lord: why tarriest thou without?*" Our once weary and heavy-laden souls have found rest in Jesus: and "YET *there is room.*" With John should you say, "Behold the Lamb of God;" and from a grateful sense of security and acceptance through his blood, go on to say with Moses, "*Come with us and we will do you good.*" Thus by your "good conversation in Christ;" enquirers will

[l] 1 John ii, 4—6. [m] Ps. 59, 17.

be taught; mourners will be comfored ; Jesus, your Lord, will be glorified ; and you will with the whole family of the redeemed in heaven and earth, rejoice together in one common but all-and-infinitely-glorious salvation, enjoy the same security in your Common Refuge, and unite in the same song of " Worthy is the Lamb" with hearts and tongues in sweet and de-delightful unison to all eternity.

DISCOURSE X.

FORGETFULNESS OF GOD: ITS EVIL.

PSALM 50, 22.

*Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you.**

FORGET God?—is it possible? What! when we see his "eternal power and godhead" in all things above us and around us? If we look up to the Heavens, "the Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work." If we look around us here, "the earth is full of his goodness." God's is the sun that makes our day; his the moon that cheers our night. Because he is merciful and true the varying seasons of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, therefore, fail not. He it is that clothes our vales and hills with fruitfulness; at whose bidding the Heavens drop down their dew, and the earth yields her increase. He, more than all, it is who pitied man when fallen, loved us when sinful, and saved us when lost. He it is who gave an only-begotten son to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of his people Israel;" who hath given us the Gospel

* The Author remembers to have heard, when a child, this text discoursed on: the remarks then made very powerfully impressed his mind: some of these may here possibly be repeated.

of Jesus Christ, and therewith his Holy Spirit to unfold and apply its mysteries, and to dispose our naturally unwilling hearts to receive its truths. And is it possible that men should forget this kind and gracious God? Yes: certain it is men do forget him, and forget him, too, to such an extent as they are little aware. These characters are described in the Psalm before us. They may, indeed, take God's covenant in their mouth; but they hate instruction, and cast his word behind them. When they see a thief, they consent to thieve with him, and are partakers with the adulterer in his crimes. They give their mouth to evil, and their tongue frameth deceit. They sit and speak against their brother, and slander their own mother's son. These things they do, and a merciful God keeps silence: because he forbears to avenge the wrongs they do him, they think him such an one as themselves—regardless of human actions and dispositions; and because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, they think, forsooth, it will not be executed at all. But "I will reprove them, saith the Lord, and set their doings in order before them." And now succeeds the solemn caution in our text—"Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Forgetfulness of God is the source of their wickedness, and this persisted in, will induce a punishment from which there will be none to deliver.

Now here are three things for our consideration:

I. An Evil spoken of:
II. A Punishment denounced against it:
And III. A Means whereby to remedy the evil and to avoid the punishment.

There is
I. An *Evil* spoken of—

The Evil spoken of in our text is—*forgetfulness of God.* That many do forget God is, unhappily, too

easy to be proved. Some there are so foolish as to say, "There is no God."[a] Pharoah-like, they proudly ask, "Who is the Lord?" and ignorantly say, "I know not the Lord."[b] Such particularly are atheists. They would rather "the Lord God of Israel should cease from before them."[c] But you will find on enquiry, that they are "become corrupt and are abominable in their doings," and that therefore they *wish* there was no God, and hence in the foolishness of their heart, they try to persuade themselves that there is none. Such persons may be said willingly to forget God.

Many, again, there are who though they believe there is a God, yet believe not in the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible is a just, pure, and holy being: loving righteousness and hating iniquity; approachable only by a Mediator and worshipped "in vain" unless worshipped "in Spirit and in truth:" their God is a God 'all mercy,' easily appeased when offended, indulgent to human frailty, and, in short "such an one as themselves" and as their own depraved imaginations choose to make him. But, the altar, surely of such persons is reared "*To the unknown God,*" and it cannot possibly be said that they remember or revere "the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent."

Others there are who allow that "doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth," and rules his rational and intelligent creatures by a law "holy, just, and good:" and yet through the whole course of their lives have paid no respect to the word, will, or authority of their Sovereign Creator. With regard, for instance, to the *Sabbath,*—how many have attained, it may be, to manhood and old-age who have never yet kept a single Sabbath holy! "Thou shalt keep my Sabbath, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord."[d] And again, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,"[e] saith the Lord. And yet multitudes there are

[a] Ps, 14, 1. [b] Exod. v, 2. [c] Isa. xxx, 11.
[d] Lev. xix, 30. [e] Exod. xx, 8.

who make little or no distinction between the Sabbath and another day. They can cheerfully even trouble and inconvenience themselves, to "find their own ways and to do their own pleasure on God's holy day;" but where is their readiness to do the will and pleasure of their Lord? To see a friend or to settle an account, many will travel miles on the Sabbath: whereas, they cannot come to the House of Prayer though it be but a few yards from them. Must not such forget God?

How common a thing is *Swearing!* Upon the least provocation, about things the most trivial and unimportant, and often without any provocation whatever, foul and impious oaths fill the mouths of many. We can hardly pass through the streets and lanes of our towns and villages, but our ears are assailed with dreadfully profane and terrifying expressions. Men seem proud to resemble the Devil and to use the Devil's language. Genteel, it may be in the opinion of some persons to swear; but fashion cannot change the turpitude of moral guilt. Can the swearer be said to remember God? Rather, does he not impiously forget *who* hath said, "*Swear not at all?*"

How commonly, too, do we hear the Lord's name taken in vain! The name which is above every name—the name which all the hosts of Heaven hallow and adore—the name at which every knee shall bow, is used as familiarly and irreverently in the conversation of many people as any word whatever. Now God has (and for reasons, doubtless, wise and good) forbidden the vain mention of his name; and has, moreover, solemnly declared He will not hold him guiltless who dares to do so. Then, surely, those who take the name of the Lord in vain, must be forgetful of Him.

How eagerly by many are the pleasures and the fashions and the favours of the world desired and sought! God has said, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."[f]

[f] Rom. xii, 2.

Now where the mind is devoted to pleasure, to fashion, or to "men-pleasing," is it possible that God can be supremely loved and gratefully remembered? People excuse indeed their worldliness, and say, 'Where is the harm of a little innocent pleasure? Is it not allowable and right to enjoy ourselves?' Yes, truly, we reply: but, nothing is innocent, nothing is allowable, nothing is right, in which God is forgotten, His authority contemned, His glory not designed, and His blessing not to be expected. And you will very generally find that those who are the most worldly and most conformed in disposition and habit to the ways and customs of the world, are the most forgetful of God.

But further: Many there are who when the morning dawns upon them, and they wake from the slumbers of the night, rise and go forth to their daily occupations, without ever bowing their knees in humble adoration of their Almighty Guardian and Protector. And when the evening closes and the shades of night once more invite them to repose, they do not think "in whom they live," by whom they have been strengthened for labour, and on whose bounty they daily and hourly exist. Of this careless forgetfulness of himself the Lord complains, saying by his servant Isaiah, "*The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider,*"[g] May not the Lord justly ask, "If I be a Father, where is mine honour?"[h] Could we forget a Father whom we loved, and whose smile was both the propelling motive and the approving plaudit of our obedience?

Again, How many Masters and Parents are there who never call their children and their households round them for the worship of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of mercies! In many families God seems totally forgotten. In others he is acknowledged just *once* a-week:—some will just repeat the

[g] Ch. i, 3. [h] Mal. i, 6.

Catechism or it may be read a Chapter and say a prayer on a *Sabbath* evening, and on no other occasion through the week. But, this manifests a very reluctant remembrance of God, if *he* deems it any remembrance of himself at all. He says in Deut. vi., 6 and 7. —"These words which I command thee shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and *when thou liest down and when thou risest up.*" Must not God, then, most certainly be forgotten by those who attempt not his worship, read not his Word, nor endeavour practically to enforce it, statedly and constantly, in their families?

Prayer, too, before and after meals is, in many houses, lamentably omitted. Many sit down to their meals, and partake of those things which a bounteous God gives them richly to enjoy without the slightest possible acknowledgment of his mercies. The every good they possess cometh down from above; but, alas! no thanksgiving goes back to Heaven in return. Some indeed mutter a something over their board, but there is plainly no heartfelt remembrance of God in the service. There is, commonly, no mention whatever of the Mediator, by the purchase of whose blood alone goodness and mercy are bestowed upon us. The lips of many freeze while uttering the name of Jesus. They shrink from the utterance of it—and instead of it will say—'Thank Providence or thank Heaven,' ashamed, in truth, to acknowledge their Redeemer. Whereas, the precept of the Gospel is, "Whether ye *eat* or *drink*, or whatsoever ye do, do all *in the name of the Lord Jesus.*"[i] He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that hath sent him. And since it is the Father's will that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour himself, those who do not

[i] 1 Cor. x, 31.

so must forget God and treat his will with indifference and contempt. From I Cor. x, 7 it should seem that a graceless meal was an idolatrous feast—the worship of an idol-god.

Still nearer to your bosoms and to your consciences than we have done, might we come: and we would fain do so, did we not fear too lengthened a discussion of our first head of discourse. Forgetfulness of God must already appear to you to be an evil awfully prevalent. But, suffer me to ask, do not many forget God even in his more immediate presence and service? Even in the great congregation, it may with truth be said, "God is not in *all* their thoughts."[k] A thousand things come into their minds and find a ready lodgement there, but God is not among them all. Many attend their church merely because it is Sunday, or because others do so, or because they have, perhaps, nothing just now to call them elsewhere, or because it is one part of their "will-worship" and self-righteousness to keep (as they say) to their Church. But, in all this God may be forgotten. How many when at church are too lofty in their imaginations to *kneel* while we pray, or to *stand* while we sing! Wandering eyes betray a vacant mind. The utmost inattention is apparent in many. Their whole deportment manifests forgetfulness of God, and all their religion terminates with the close of the sabbath and its services.

And shall we pretend that there is little or no evil in this forgetfulness of the glorious and eternal God? How does that God himself regard it?—How, I would know, would *you* regard the forgetfulness of a child whom you had tenderly nourished, or a friend to whom you had shewn great and abundant kindnesses? Would it not grieve you? Would you not feel it to be an evil?—Then, be assured, "an evil and a bitter thing it is to sin against God," nor can our forgetfulness of him be otherwise than offensive to him. This will fully appear whilst we consider

[k] Ps. 10, 4.

II.—A *Punishment* denounced against it:

"Now, consider this, ye that forget God, *lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.*" The expressions "*tear you in pieces,*" and "*none to deliver,*" forcibly imply that the Punishment God will inflict on those who forget him will be *sudden, terrible,* and *without remedy.*

Those who forget God may commonly be observed to be thoughtlessly secure. They resemble those whom Gideon smote.[l] Their security is their danger. "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then *sudden* destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape."[m] In Hosea xiii, 6, the Lord traces Israel's forgetfulness of him to pride and exaltation of heart, and says, "Therefore, I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion."[n] Now, how suddenly does a beast of prey sieze upon its hapless victim! Unconscious, perhaps, of danger, in a moment it finds itself in the power of a creature mightier to destroy than itself. Such seems to be the figure used by the Spirit in our text to convey to us some idea of the suddenness of the wicked's visitation. "Their calamity," says the Prophet, "shall rise suddenly;" and often do we see "*in an instant, suddenly,*" the enemies of the Lord cut off.[o] Little did the children of Bethel, when they mocked Elisha, expect to be torn in pieces:[p] and little do many that forget God conceive how soon "a sudden destruction from the Lord" may come upon them

It is implied also that their Punishment will be *terrible.* God can make the wicked a terror to themselves.[q] He can appoint terror over them and within them.[r] He can himself—though to his believing people he is the God of all grace and the Father of mer-

[l] Jud. viii, 11. [m] 1 Thess. v, 3. [n] verses 7, 8.
[o] Isa. xlvii, 11. and xxix, 5. [p] 2 Kings ii, 24. [q] Jer. xx, 4.
[r] Lev. xxvi, 16. Deut. xxxii, 25.

cies—yet he can *himself* be a terror to those who forget him.[s] Instead of the smiles, "the terrors of God do set themselves in array against them."[t] When the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit, pierces to the discerning of their thoughts and intents, or when their sin finds them out, how do the wicked tremble! "They are utterly consumed with terrors."[v] What appalling terribleness is there in the idea of being torn in pieces by a lion, a leopard, or a bear! How surpassingly terrible, then, must be the wrath of an angry God! With the wicked God is angry every day:[w] and though he may forbear for a season to destroy them in his wrathful displeasnre, yet do they live to heap up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.[x] And what a *wrench*, oftentimes, is the separation of the careless and ungodly from the world by Death! They are absolutely *torn away* from all they value or enjoy. The shadow of death comes upon them fraught with terrors; their very souls are agonized: O might they live! but no: a forgotten God will remind them of himself, and because they forget him in time, they shall remember him to their utter confusion in eternity. Where the groans of expiration cease, the howlings of the damned commence. Thus we see the Punishment which forgetfulness of God induces is *terrible*.

But the bitterest ingredient of the punishment remains to be told—It will be *without remedy*: From it there will be "*none to deliver*:" No, NONE *to deliver*. Not the *Lord Jesus Christ*; for he says, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh: When your fear cometh as a desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you: Then

[s] Jer. xvii, 17. [t] Job vi, 4. [v] Ps. 73, 19.
[w] Ps. 7, 11. [x] Rom. ii, 5.

shall they call upon me; but I will not answer: they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord."[z] In this world only can deliverance from wrath be obtained: beyond it there is no Saviour. Nor can *Angels* save us. They acquiesce in their Sovereign's pleasure and approve the sentence which he passes on all who forget him. "*True and righteous are thy judgments,*" forms part of the song of the angels and the redeemed in glory.[a] Nor can *men* deliver from the wrath to come. In Ps. 49, 7 and 8, we read, "*None of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him: for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever*"* You know one is represented to us—as applying to a redeemed saint for ease and comfort amidst his woeful torments; but, the application was made in vain. He could not obtain even "*a drop of water to cool his tongue;*" much less could he be redeemed from punishment. His punishment was remediless. You may hear indeed of some who invoke the saints—pray *to* the dead *for* the dead; but it is "a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God."[b] It is indeed a doctrine befitting "the Beast," "the Man of Sin;" but it is utterly at variance with the Word of God, (Matt. iv, 10. for instance) and therefore to be utterly rejected and contemned by all whose rule of faith and conduct is *the Bible.* Thus it appears how truly there are "NONE to deliver." "His calamity cometh suddenly; suddenly shall the wicked be broken, and that *without remedy.*"[c]

And now to confirm what has been advanced, allow me just to refer you to a text or two of Holy Writ

* Let this text be well considered: Can we wonder at the Papists withholding the Spriptures from their laity?

[z] Prov. i, 4, &c. [a] Rev. xvi, 7. [b] Our xxii Art. [c] Prov. vi, 15.

which contain, in substance, all that we have said. In Jer. xxiii. 39 and 40, we read, "Therefore, I, even I, will utterly forget you; and I will forsake you and cast you out of my presence: And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you and a perpetual shame that shall not be forgotten." Observe these words: "*I, even I,* will do it," saith the Lord God. And what will he do? Not "*forget*" those who forget him merely; but "*utterly* forget" them: Not "*forsake*" them merely; but "*cast them out of his presence:*" Not "bring a reproach upon them" which the lapse of time shall wipe away; but "an *everlasting* reproach" and "a shame" of "*perpetual*" endurance "*that shall not be forgotten.*" And again in Ps. 9, 17, we read," *The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God.*" Saith the *Lord* these things? Shall then his Ministers be blamed for saying them? Should we fulfil our embassy to a "world lying in wickedness" and asleep, too fatally secure, in the arms of the wicked one, did we altogether exclude "the terrors of the Lord" from our ministrations? Certainly we should not. The thunders of Sinai must alarm before the consolations of Zion can be felt. And when we declare the punishment denounced against forgetfulness of God, it is in order to consider

III. A *Means* whereby to remedy the evil and to avoid the punishment.

The means our text prescribes is—*Consideration*: "Now, *consider* this," and do so, "LEST I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver." The sinful inconsiderateness of our wicked heart is the occasion of the evil, and consequently is the ruin of the many who live and die forgetful of God our Saviour. "They *consider not* that they do evil."[e] "They *consider not*

[e] Ecc. v, 1.

in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness," saith the Lord by Hosea the prophet.[f] "Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord-- CONSIDER."[g] Consider *yourselves*. Call home to you your vagrant thoughts. Fix them with scrutinizing earnestness on your state; your character; your motives, hopes, and aims. "See what manner of spirit you are of." Inquire whether you remember God at all; in what way you remember him, and whether your remembrance of him be sweet, affectionate, and kind. Thus sweet were the Psalmist's meditations on God.[h] Low and unprofitable is your religion, if your thoughts of God be cold, distant, and reserved. You may judge of your spiritual state by your taste or distaste of spiritual things. Then "*know this and consider it in thine heart.*"[i]

Consider also your *obligations* to the Author of all being and existence. How manifold, how various, how great, are his mercies! Before you were born was he mindful of you, and since you were born has he unweariedly been mindful of you. By mercies daily multiplied upon you, does he beseech you to be reconciled to him. He commendeth his love to our consideration;[k] and lest we should doubt his loving-kindness and truth, he "spareth not his own Son, but freely gives him up for us all."[l] Your privilege it is to eat even "angels' food[m];" for on you doth God bestow "the Truth as it is in Jesus," and you does he "feed in green pastures and lead beside waters of comfort." The Lord has, moreover, set a Watchman upon your walls that *dares* to sound the trumpet of alarm, and to warn you of the danger inseparably connected with forgetfulness of God, and that *lest* He tear you in pieces, and the sword of his justice be bathed in your blood. Then "*think of these things,*" and consider how surely the very "goodness of God," unless it lead you to repentance, will increase and aggravate your

[f] Ch. vii, 2. [g] Hag. i, 5. [h] Ps. 104—34. [i] Deut. iv, 39.
[k] Rom. v, 8. [l] Rom. viii, 32. [m] Ps. 78, 25.

condemnation. "*Consider how great things* he hath done for you."[m]

Consider, too, *how lamentably God is forgotten in the World.* How few remember him at all! How few of the few who do remember him, think of him cordially and gratefully! Because, then, so many "live without God in the World," it should be your determination to "remember him in his ways," and habitually to "consider the operations of his hands." Do some fools say in their heart, There is no God? Ask them, How came the Universe into being; How they themselves exist; and whether but for the corruption of their hearts and the abominations of their lives, they would not most readily allow that there is a God.—Do some doubt whether the Bible be a Revelation of the Divine Will? Ask them how far they have examined its pretences to credibility and the truth of its statements. See whether but for the holiness of its precepts, the sublimity of its doctrines, the tremendousness of its sanctions, they would not believe and admit the Bible's every portion. It is the *heart,* not the *head,* that makes our infidels.—Is the Sabbath by many unobserved, and its means neglected? Do you hallow it, and give the *Day,* not merely some two or three hours of it, to devotional and religious duties.—Is swearing common? Let oaths and blasphemies, "foolish jestings and talking," share no part of your conversation: "let them not be *once named among you.*" Whenever you hear an oath, reprove it; and whilst the swearer prays to be 'damned,' do you lift up your heart to God for his soul's salvation.* Is the Lord's Name commonly profaned? O let the mention of that "great and fearful Name" fill you with solemn awe and reverential dread. Is this present World the *all* of the

* See No. 76 of Series the First of the Tracts of the Religious Tract Society. It is peculiarly striking and impressive. See, too, Lev. xxiv, 10—16.

[m] 1 Sam. xii, 24.

majority of its population? Affect ye a better portion: be *Mary's* choice *your* choice.[n] "Come out from among" its votaries, "and be separated" from their ways, vanities, and pursuits. Prefer a Church to a Theatre,*—communion with God, to the "filthy conversation of the wicked." What are the pleasures of sense and sin, to the pleasantness and peace of Piety? Earthly pleasures may have, "*as it were,* crowns on their heads:" but they *certainly* have "stings in the tails."[o] Do many live without prayer either in their chambers secretly alone with God, or in their houses amidst their families? Do you "enter into your closets, and shut the door and pray to your Father which seeth in secret," and let "the voice of praise and thanksgiving" be heard also in your dwellings. Wherever your tent may be pitched, rear, as Abraham reared, an altar to the Lord. When lying down and rising up; when partaking of the social meal or engaged in necessary and lawful labour—"in *all* your ways acknowledge him," and consider how you may best promote his glory. In all you are and in all you do, let it be seen that you remember God, and thus reprove and shame those who live forgetful of him.

But, finally, consider *the consequence* that must necessarily result from a sinful forgetfulness of God. This we have before endeavoured to shew you. Do

* See Styles on the Stage: a small but excellent Work. See, also, Wilberforce's Practical View, page 194 of the Fourteenth Edition. As a Clergyman, the Author begs, too, to refer his reader to the 75th Canon of his Church;—this will sufficiently warrant his inculcation of deadness to the World, and a preference of heavenly to earthly pleasures. The Canon is too long to quote entire: for the satisfaction, however, of his reader, the Author will just state that "Ministers are required not to give themselves to any base or servile labour, *or to drinking or riot, spending their time idly by day or by night, playing at dice,* CARDS, *tables, or any other unlawful games:*"——Let this be considered. Is it less the Law of our truly excellent Church than the 73d or any other of our Canons? How often (but how falsely) is the 73d said to be impugned! How seldom (in fact) is the 75th regarded!

[n] Luke x, 42. [o] Rev. ix, 10.

not forget the Wicked's being torn in pieces. Think upon it. It may produce that pain of heart which will endear the balm of mercy. See what you deserve, and think what Jesus suffered. *He* did not forget God, nor even amidst the agonies of the cross did he forget you. "*Father, forgive them!*" was his cry. Realize this scene,—and you will be earnest in supplication for that grace of the Spirit whereby you may amend your lives and live according to God's holy Word. And oh! that you may hereafter feel a fervour which you never felt before, while saying—'From all evil and mischief; from sin; from the crafts and assaults of the devil; from thy wrath, and from everlasting damnation,—Good Lord, deliver us.'

DISCOURSE XI.

THE BETTER FEAST.*

Isaiah lxv, 13, 14.

Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of Spirit.

It is observable how frequently in Holy Scripture mankind are divided into two classes. In one place they are the sheep and the goats which the good shep-

* It may be well to inform the Reader that this, and the discourse immediately following it, were preached the Sunday after what usually, in a country village, is termed the Feast Sunday: the *Feast Sunday*, be it remembered, is, in most places, the commencement of a week of idleness, drunkenness, and almost general dissipation. Its probable origin may be seen in Milner's Church History, cent. vi, vol. iii, page 79.

[a] Matt. xxv, 32.

herd will eventually separate, the one from the other.[a] In another place they are the barren and the fruitful branches of the true vine.[b] Again, they are compared to tares and wheat; the one of which shall be burned up and the other gathered into the celestial garner.[c] They are described also as walking after the flesh and after the Spirit.[d] And "then," says the Prophet Malachi, "shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, *between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.*"[e] In the text, too, the Lord God himself clearly distinguishes between his servants and others. The one shall eat, drink, and rejoice; the other shall hunger, thirst, and be sorrowful. Among many things which characterize them respectively is this—the servants of the Lord are "careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, they make known their requests unto God, and the peace of God keeps their heart and mind through Jesus Christ:" Such as "do evil before his eyes and choose that wherein he delighteth not," are careful and troubled about many things. The one are solicitous to seek "first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," in the believing confidence that all other needed things shall be super-added to the gift of an only-begotten Son and eternal life in him: the other are desirous mainly to possess "a portion in this life," and have little or no concern about a world to come. The souls of both parties are alike immortal, and capable alike of immortal joys and pleasures: but the gratifications of the one as entirely differ from the gratifications of the other as do their respective desires, tastes, aims, and hopes. "*Behold!*" saith the Lord God; and let our ear be turned with listening and heedful attention to "what the Lord God saith concerning us"—"*Behold, my servants shall eat, but &c. &c.*"

[b] John xv, 1—6. [c] Matt. xiii, 24—47. [d] Rom. viii, 1.
[e] Ch. iii, 18.

Naturally do these words lead us to consider,

I. The blessedness of those who serve the Lord; And II. The wretchedness of those who serve him not.

In considering

I. *The blessedness of those who serve the Lord.*

We must observe that the Lord's servants ar they whose hearts have felt the emptiness of all things here below; whose souls have been won to Jesus Christ, and who can feelingly say with Isaiah, "Other Lords beside thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy Name."[f] They have —not professedly merely, but really and truly 'renounced the Devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the World, with all the sinful lusts of the Flesh.' They found Satan to be a hard master, and the ways of transgression also to be hard: God's service, on the contrary, is their perfect and delightful freedom, and to do his will on earth as angels do it in the realms above, is their desire and aim. They deem not themselves their own. They are the purchased property of Him who hath redeemed them to God by his blood. "Born from above" they affect a "conversation in Heaven." While their Lord delayeth his coming, they "watch." "As the eyes of a servant look unto the hand of his master, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, (to catch the first intimation of their will and to be ready instantly to obey their call) so do their eyes wait upon the Lord their God."[g] In short, they "serve the Lord with gladness," and their graciously condescending Lord, "rejoicing over them to do them good," declares, "My servants shall eat; my servants shall drink; my servants shall rejoice and sing for joy of heart."

They *shall eat.* The Lord's servants may be in a country far removed from holiness and happiness, and

[f] Ch. xxvi. 13. [g] Ps. 123, 2.

where is arisen a mighty famine of spiritual good; but "*they* shall want no manner of thing that is good." It is with others to "fill their belly with husks;" they have "bread enough and to spare." Plenteous, rich, and various are the provisions of their "Father's house." Once, indeed, they were "aliens and foreigners" even as others; but now they are "fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God." Once they "were as sheep going astray; now they are returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their Souls." The good of all the Redeemer's kingdom is their's. Christ, their Redeemer, feeds them. *Himself* is their food.[h] On him by faith they feed. He is the true Joseph to whom the true Israel apply for the bread whereby themselves and their little ones may live. Like the once poor sorrowing Hannah, *when her prayer was heard*, "she did eat and was no more sorrowful:"[f] so the servants of the Lord Jesus, "eat and are satisfied." They have, as their Redeemer had, "meat to eat which the world knoweth not of" They "hunger no more, neither thirst any more," after sin, the world, and the world's perishable and passing good. They taste the graciousness of God. A moment's recollection before him and in the apprehension of things eternal, affords a diviner joy to their souls than a thousand years of pleasurable sin would do. They are satiated with the Divine goodness,[k] and filled with good things.[l] The fruit of the Tree of life is their daily comfort, and its leaves are for the healing of their sorrows.[m] There is not a promise of mercy in the Bible but affords food to their faith and sustenance to their souls. In fine, they are "*the blessed of the Lord;*" and *their heritage is of me*, saith the Lord." Individually, therefore, may they well reply, "*Surely the lot is fallen unto me in a fair place; yea, I have a goodly heritage.*"

But God's servants *shall drink*. They may be in

[h] John vi, 48 [f] 1 Sam. i, 10—18 [k] Jer. xxxi, 25
[l] Luke i, 53 [m] Rev. xxii, 2

"a dry and thirsty land where no water is:" but the God whom they serve says, "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."[n] Of old, he caused a refreshing stream to issue from the rock of flint "to give drink to Israel his chosen:" and now also would he work the same gracious and mysterious work again rather than his servants should not be refreshed and blessed. *Would* work it, did I say? Hath he not wrought it? Hath he not "provided some *better* thing for us?"—The rod of his justice hath smitten the Rock of our Salvation,[o] and now doth "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal," cheering and exhilarating as the dew of Heavenly blessing, go along with his people as they journey onward through the wilderness of the world to the Canaan of promise. Time was, perhaps, when *they* too drank of the shallow and unsatisfying streams of sensual carnal mirth: but they were bitter waters as were the waters of Marah.[p] Drink as much as they would of these streams, they "thirsted again." Desire remained unsatiated and the soul unblessed. They felt as Hagar felt when she sat down so mournfully in the wilderness to see her child die.[q] God, at length, pointed them as he pointed Hagar, to "a flowing well," and now how sweetly sounds the voice of invitation in the words—"Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price!"[r] Where the thirst of desire has been created, the abounding mercies and consolations of the Gospel are bestowed. A voice of winning and beseeching

[n] Isa. xli, 17, 18 [o] Deut. xxxii, 15 [p] Exod. xv, 23.
[q] Gen. xxi, 16—19 [r] Isa. lv, 1.

entreaty, says "*Come unto me and drink:*" it is "the voice of the Beloved." The servants of God are drawn to him. Fearing at first to come, they cast about them for "money" or merit to recommend them to his mercy: Unable to find any, and feeling a continually increasing "thirst," they, at last, venture to come "without money and without price." Poor as they are, Jesus receives them graciously, and becomes to them, with all his treasured fulness of blessings, their souls' dear Lord and Saviour. "All their fresh springs are in Him." And so mercifully does he deal with them, that they themselves become in heart and spirit "as a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."[s] The Spirit of Christ in his kindly influences refreshes now the believing soul, and will eventually "spring up" and issue in that soul's "everlasting life."[t] "Living water" does the Heavenly Master give his disciples to drink; and every drop of spiritual comfort which they here enjoy is to them both a pledge and a foretaste of that fathomless shoreless ocean of delight in which their souls shall hereafter bathe for ever. With what propriety, then, may we add

The servants of the Lord *shall rejoice and sing for joy of heart!* They may, it is true, be often in circumstances painful and distressing; "To trouble man is born:"[v] but the servants of Christ can "take *pleasure* in necessities and distresses." Their Master's strength is "perfected," or shewn to be perfect, in their weakness.[w] For his sake, therefore, they joy not in consolations merely, but in tribulations also. Sometimes, it may be, "their sighs are many and their heart is faint:"[x] but God "turns and revives them again, and causes his servants to rejoice in him." Occasional hunger, painfulness, and weariness, do but enhance the value and add relish to the enjoyment of "a feast of

[s] Isa. lviii, 11 [t] John iv, 14 [v] Job v, 7.
[w] 2 Cor. xii, 9 [x] Lam. i, 22

fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, a feast of fat things full of marrow."[y] It is "in *the night*," the Lord especially "giveth songs."[z] Paul and Silas had, perhaps, never sung so sweetly, had they not sung amidst dungeon-horrors and midnight shades.[a] Prisons, chains, and quaternions of soldiers, cannot affect "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." The liberty of His servants is a *glorious* liberty." There is no one called in the Lord, even though he be a servant, but he is the *Lord's freeman*.[b] And my servants *shall* sing, my servants *shall* rejoice, is the faithful promise of a faithful God. "Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." "Light is *sown* for the righteous," and "it *springeth up* in their darkness." In all circumstances, they will "speak good of their Redeemer's Name," and "sing and make melody in their hearts to the Lord." They will be telling of all his wondrous works, that his works and mercies may be known among men. As for their enemies, they shall laugh them to scorn, whilst among themselves they shall enjoy a sweet and peaceful union with their Lord, and with each other in him. As for the poor in spirit; them that mourn; the meek; them that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; the merciful; the pure in heart; the peace-makers; the reviled and the persecuted for Jesus' sake, they are "blessed."[c] None, indeed, know their blessedness, but those who feel it: it is "a joy with which the stranger intermeddleth not." Even amid the agonies of life's last conflict, Christian Principle evidenced by Christian conduct, triumphs and rejoices. That conflict over, the servants of God shall indeed "rejoice and sing for joy of heart!" A harp attuned to the high praises of both redeemed and unfallen multitudes, shall tell, in strains of the most perfect and unmingled harmony, the blessedness of the people whose God is

[y] Isa. xxv, 6 [z] Job xxxv, 10 [a] Acts xvi, 25.
[b] 1 Cor. vii, 22 [c] Matt. v, 1—12

the Lord Jehovah ; yea, the blessedness of the people who have the Lord for their God.[d] They *shall eat;* they *shall drink* ; they *shall rejoice:* And when come to the heavenly Zion, they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.[e]

Mark, then, the blessedness of God's servants : see how truly we may say—" Happy art thou, O Israel ! who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord ?"[f]

Consider we now

II. *The wretchedness of those who serve Him not*—

But, alas ! my Brethren, that so fair and beautiful a theme as that we have just considered, should be, as it were, deformed by one in every respect its opposite ! One feels almost disposed to close the subject here, rather than forego our contemplations on the blessedness of the Lord's servants ; but did we, we should leave half our text unnoticed, and those who serve not God amongst you might suppose we feared to declare unto them their wretchedness, One advantage, too, we trust, will accrue from a prosecution of our subject —you will see the blessedness of God's servants contrasted with the wretchednes of those who serve him not ; and things seen in *contrast* are usually the most distinguishable and impressive. But *who* are those that serve not the Lord ? Such as " walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts :" Such as say, " Stand by thyself ; come not near to me ; for I am holier than thou art :" while, notwithstanding their proud vaunting, they are " a rebellious people," and guilty of " abominable things :" Such as " forsake the Lord, forget his holy mountain, and prepare a table and furnish drink"—(may we not without wresting them, construe these words to mean *a drunken revel ?*) for the enemies of the Lord and his Servants :— such as, finally, hear not the voice of the Lord, but " do evil before his eyes continually, and choose that wherein he delighteth not." (See context) —" *Who,*

[d] Ps. 144, 15. [e] Isa. xxxv, 10 [f] Deut. xxxiii, 29.

say they, *is the Lord, that we should serve him?*" "*As for this Man, we will not have Him to reign over us.*" "Our mouth is our own: *Who is Lord over us?*"* — Now, the wretchedness of such persons is extreme. "Thus saith the Lord God, Ye shall be hungry; ye shall be thirsty; ye shall be ashamed, and shall cry for sorrow of heart and shall howl for vexation of spirit."

They *shall be hungry*. What a craving may we observe in many—a painful and continual craving, after something unpossessed! There is within them a kind of aching void. Aware of no higher good, having no taste for spiritual pleasures, they endeavour to fill the void which they so sensibly feel within them, with earthly and perishable things. If wealth be their idol, they will "rise early and late take rest" to accumulate it. If pleasure be their idol, they will pass days and nights together in the pursuit of it—heedless of fatigue, danger, or disease, whilst fulfilling so eagerly the desires of the flesh and of the mind. If a village feast be the object of expected or immediate enjoyment, this, even *this*, trifling and vain as are its usual accompaniments, will occasion more thought, anxiety, and care, to many than an approaching Communion, a dying bed, or even an eternal world beyond it. What endeavour, strenuous endeavour, do we see to please and to be pleased; but in vain: "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked:" they *shall* hunger; nor shall aught of a mere earthly kind ever be found fully to satisfy the capacities of an immortal soul. The worshippers of Mammon may eat indeed, but "they feed on ashes." No permanent satisfaction flows from carnal indulgence. Amidst this world's

* The applicability of Scripture to human sentiment and character is a great and decisive evidence of its Divine original. Who but One that "knew what was in man," and "searcheth all things" could have dictated the above expressions? How exactly do they accord with the very feelings of the gay and worldly when advised to abstain from "revellings and such like" destructive pursuits!

sufficiency, a man may be in straits[s]. Dives seemed to fare sumptuously, and that *every* day:—but his soul was lean and wretched. "The true bread" alone can nourish and sustain man's better part. Where this is unknown and unvalued, possess what we may, enjoy what we may, we neither possess nor enjoy any thing worth having. Let the "servant of Sin" but become "the servant of Righteousness," and we will dare to say that he will "set to his seal that our testimony is true:"—he will unhesitatingly acknowledge, "I have eaten ashes as it were bread: I have spent my strength for nought, and my money for that which satisfieth not.*" And is not this to starve amidst abundance? Is not this a state of mind the most comfortless and wretched?

Moreover, the Lord says those who serve him no*t shall be thirsty*. Where worldly, envious, covetous, desires possess the mind, there is, as it were, a thirst: but no "excess of riot," no abundance of worldly good, no amusement however refined or vulgar, will satisfy them. Like the Grave, they are ever saying, "Give, give;" but they never say, "It is enough." Every delight of the sensualist may be compared to the water of Jacob's well, of which "whosoever drinketh shall thirst again." It is impossible that any water but "the water of life" should gladden and refresh our souls. "The god of this world" cannot guide his people beside "waters of comfort." He may tell them they are waters of comfort; allure them to a participation of them; and drown their apprehen-

* This acknowledgement has been made more than once to the Author by persons who have '*kept the Feast*,' (as a union with others in revelling and riot is usually called,) after they have seen the folly of their ways and been reconciled to God through the death of his Son. Let *one* who may read this note "*rejoice with trembling*."

s Job xx, 22.

sion and sense of danger in frivolity and noise: but he will be found a deceiver, and all his pleasures but so many drops of "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." Blame not our plainness of speech: shall we see so many of our fellow sinners forsaking "the Fountain of Living Waters, and hewing out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," and shall we refrain from crying, "Ho! every one that thirsteth"—ho! every one that is desirous of happiness, forsake and away with your lying vanities, and "with joy shall ye draw water from the wells of Salvation?" Ye *shall* thirst, while ye drink only of this world's good. And O how wretched will it be everlastingly to thirst, and everlastingly to be destitute of mercy and peace. The rich man we before alluded to, wanted "a drop of water" in hell, and even *that* little favour he could not obtain. Let the drunkard hear and tremble. Let the sensualist fear and pray.

But, such as serve not God *shall be ashamed and shall cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit. Shame; sorrow; vexation; sorrow of heart; vexation of spirit.* What an accumulation of words to express the wretchedness of the ungodly! However things and circumstances may blend one with the other now, and however dimly their consequences may be discerned, the time is coming when the things of this world and the realities of an after state, will appear in their just and proper light. God and Mammon, with their respective services, wages, and rewards; the pleasures of piety and those of sense; the blessedness of the real Christian, and the wretchedness of the mere nominal professor of Christianity; all will easily and clearly appear. Then how ashamed and confounded will the servants of Mammon be! How willingly would they that "the mountains and the rocks of the earth should fall on them and cover them!"[h] But, were it possible for them to be buried beneath the

[h] Luke xxiii, 30.

ruins of universal nature, yet, possessing a conscious existence, shame and disappointment would possess their anguished heart:—their "*heart*" would be sorrowful, and their "*spirit*" would be vexed. Where would now be those foolish sports, those carnal songs, those "filthy jestings," wherewith they once sought to gratify and please themselves and others? Alas! they are exchanged for cries of sorrow and howlings of despair. The once-forgotten words of the preacher—"I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doeth it?"—will now be painfully remembered. The ungodly will see that "wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness."[i] Often *now* "in the laughter" of the gay and worldly, "the heart is sorrowful;" and "the *end* of their mirth," we are sure, "is heaviness."[k] If the votary of pleasure would confess it, there is, not infrequently, amidst his gayest scenes, an horrible and a dreadful anguish of heart and soul within him. In the secrecy of retirement, in the stillness of recollection, there is often a smothered cry of sorrow or howl of vexation. Smiles may beam upon the *public* face, and Gallio-like there may be a "don't care" apparent in the whole *outward* deportment, but a worm gnaws those smiles at their root, and within there is "a fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation." The meek and lowly followers of the meek and lowly Jesus may be scorned, and their conscientiousness may be termed preciseness, methodism, or what not: but the enemies of God are constrained to allow the excellence of moral and spiritual worth, and the felt conviction of their mind is—'We revere, we honour, we approve, your character; and secretly we wish ourselves like you.' Such is the wretched bondage of these "sinners against their own souls." God curses their blessings.[l] Darkness, with weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, awaits

[i] Eccles. ii, 2, 13. [k] Prov. xiv, 13. [l] Mal. ii, 2.

them.[m] They *are* wretched. and *will*, hereafter, *be* ——————but I forego the subject: I was going, however, to allude to the hereafter destiny of those who serve not God: but it is enough to repeat—They *shall hunger*, they *shall thirst*, they *shall cry for sorrow of heart and howl for vexation of spirit*.

Such is both the blessedness of the Lord's servants, and the wretchedness of those who serve him not: And that you may the more powerfully feel these things, I would, in closing this Discourse, ADDRESS

1. *Ye who serve the Lord.*

And to you I say, Be thankful to the Lord in that he has made you his people. Ye were once in bondage to Sin and Satan even as others; but in the day of your Redeemer's power, ye became willing to serve a Master in Heaven. Ye *were* wanderers, ye *are* returned. Ye *were* slaves, ye *are* children. Religion *was* your drudgery, it *is* your pleasure. "A portion in this life" was all you desired; Christ is now your "all and in all." Ye are gratefully pleased that "*this Man should reign over you*," and happily would ye spend and be spent in his service. Then may you "eat, drink, and rejoice." The Lord whom you serve engages to supply your every want, to accept your every service, and to reward, infinitely beyond its utmost merit, your every work of faith and labour of love. A "hundredfold" will he repay all that you may lose for his sake. Though "eternal life" will not be the wages of your servitude, yet "a cup of cold water"—the most trifling kindness, bestowed in love upon a servant or disciple of Jesus, "shall in no wise lose its reward." Your eternal life will reward "the travail of the Redeemer's soul," and be *given* for the *Redeemer's sake* to you. Still, however, the service of love will meet "a reward of grace," and there is nothing you even design or endeavour from faith in Christ and love to him, that will

[m] Mat. viii, 12.

be disregarded or forgotten. If so, how unreservedly, how cheerfully, how gratefully, should you serve your Lord! Be careful, then, for nothing. "Bread *shall* be given you; your waters *shall* be sure." The great Father and Master of the Universal Church will surely provide for those of his own household. The "*sure* mercies of the *ever*lasting covenant" are your's. Depend on Jesus for them as your souls may need them. Trust in his power and wisdom. He is too powerful and wise to be distrusted. You may not always see the reasons of his conduct towards you; but "what ye know not now, ye shall know hereafter." Let him be the companion and the food of your soul's best feast. Then indeed shall your "mouth be filled with laughter and your tongue with praise." "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," shall express the joyous gratulation of your hearts, and ye shall *indeed* rejoice. Turn not again, no, not in *appearance*, to "the weak and beggarly elements" whereunto so many desire to be in bondage; but "stand fast in your Christian liberty." Use not that liberty "for an occasion to the flesh:" but let your inquiry be "Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?" and "what your hand findeth to do, do it with your might," "with good-will doing service, not as pleasing men, but God who searcheth the heart." In your social and friendly visits, forget not "*whose* servants ye are." Do not be ashamed of Christ and of his word. "Hold fast the *profession* of your faith," and let the superiority of your religious principle appear in your indifference to mere worldly enjoyment and carnal mirth. Think of the mercies of your God; and in the recollection of his "exceeding great and precious promises," "eat, O Beloved, yea drink, drink abundantly, O Beloved."[a] So shall you "go from strength to strength until you appear before the Lord in Zion:" and when you have reached the city of your everlasting habitation, "ye shall hunger no more, nei-

[a] Cant. v, 1.

ther thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on you, nor any heat: For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed you, and shall lead you unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes."[o]

2. *To ye who serve not God,*

I say, Think what is your real state and danger. Your disinclination to God's service, and the willing surrender of yourselves, your mind, strength, and time, to the world, very plainly intimates whose you are and whom you serve. Your wages will correspond with your servitude: and *"the wages of sin is* DEATH." Solomon tauntingly addresseth you, saying,—"Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and the sight of thine eyes,—*but know thou, for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment.*"[p] And consider *Whose* judgment it is you dare. "Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like his?" You may, if you please, "eat, drink, and be merry:" but the world, with its fashions, friendships, and pleasures, will most surely fail you; whilst your hunger, thirst, and sorrow will remain. If you go into eternity without a taste of the Redeemer's graciousness, or a relish for spiritual things, good were it for you if you had never been born. Heaven truly is opened—its everlasting doors are unfolded; but—*only for believers.* "Blessed truly are the dead—*who die in the Lord.*" Free truly are those whom the Son makes free—*all are slaves beside.*[q] And the portion of a child or servant will certainly never be awarded to a slave. The glorious end of man's existence will be lost in you, and its loss will you mourn with unavailing sorrow and vexation for ever. "Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God," you will be found destitute

[o] Rev. vii, 16, 17. [p] Eccles. xi, 9. [q] John viii, 36.

of spiritual life. If ye cannot relish the Feast which the Lord maketh in his holy mountain below, no feast with the redeemed in glory awaits your coming into the eternal world. If "the songs of Zion" here afford no melodious gladness to your souls, you will never join the "Alleluia" of angels and the spirits of the just above. Then *think on these things*. Have no fellowship with the workers of iniquity. Come out from among them. Seek the renewing, converting, sanctifying, grace of the Holy Spirit: "seek and you shall find." "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."[r]

[r] Rev. xxii. 17.

DISCOURSE XII.

DECISION OF CHARACTER ENFORCED.

LUKE xxii, 54.

And Peter followed afar off.

THERE is a short, but beautiful and comprehensive description of the Lord's People in the 148th Psalm which cannot fail, we conceive, to please and interest every thoughtful and considerate mind: they are described as—"*a People* NEAR *unto Him.*" The Lord their God hath chosen them to be a *special* People unto himself,[a] and they have been *brought nigh* by the blood of Jesus.[b] Their fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ.[c] A holy familiarity subsists between them and the eternal God. Does He say, "Seek ye my face?" their hearts reply, "Thy face, Lord, will we seek."[d] They are happy only when the light of his countenance shines brightly on them. So *peculiar* a People are they[e]—a People so peculiarly privileged, that we may well ask with Moses, "Who is like unto thee, O People?"[f] *Who*, indeed? Where shall we find such? Whom does this nearness to God characterise? How few walk with God as Enoch walked with him! How few converse with

[a] Deut. vii, 6. [b] Eph. ii, 13. [c] 1 John i, 7.
[d] Ps. 27—8. [e] 1 Pet. ii, 9. [f] Deut. xxxiii, 29.

God as Abraham conversed with him![g] May we not say as the Apostle said—"*All men* (with but few exceptions) seek their *own* things, not the things of Jesus Christ?"[h] True, a *profession* of piety is not uncommon: there is not a little *apparent* nearness to God: In some neighbourhoods religion happens to be prevalent: many are awed into a respect for it and for its accustomed forms: it is, perhaps, reputable to be pious: a profession of piety is therefore assumed: many follow the Lord; but, alas! it is afar off: there is a want of decisiveness in the mind and character: they "endure for awhile, and in time of temptation fall away."[i] Such was Peter's indecision; and from the circumstance of his following his Lord afar off, we shall take occasion to show

I. What is implied in following the Lord afar off:
II. What usually induces any to do so:
And III. Why we should determine to follow Him fully.

We are to shew

I. *What is implied in following the Lord afar off:*—

It is implied that there is a Lord to follow, and to be convinced that we ought to follow him. Peter knew and acknowledged Jesus to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God;" he felt it, moreover, to be his duty to follow him; he, therefore, followed Jesus: but, *how* did he follow him? Why, Peter went with Jesus to the garden of Gethsemane: there, however, he could not watch with his Lord "one hour." He went with Jesus to the Judgment Hall: when come thither, he "tarried without." John—the more affectionate and now more courageous John, "went out and brought in Peter:" when within, Peter mixed—not with the friends of Jesus Christ, but—with "the ser-

[g] Gen. v, 22, and xviii, 17 [h] Phil. ii, 21. [i] Luke viii, 13

vants of the High Priest." He followed the Lord, you observe; but it was "afar off." And thus to a certain extent many follow the Lord. They believe that "God hath anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power," and "hath exalted Him to be a Prince and a Saviour:" they therefore 'call and profess themselves Christians;' are, (it may be, in their own judgment) very religious, and particularly so on the Sabbath and with religious persons; bow at the name of Jesus, honour him with their lips, and with their mouth shew much love; but—(alas! for this "*fair shew in the flesh*" that a *but* must follow it)—where is their watchfulness? where is their self-denial? where is their acknowledgement of Jesus Christ in circumstances of difficulty and trial? Peter-like, they follow the Lord, but it is afar off. Jesus triumphant, riding into Jerusalem amidst the hosannas of the multitude, they acknowledge and would make a King; Jesus suffering, they, along with the same multitude, crucify and away with. Possibly they observe the Sabbath, and very likely partake of the Lord's Supper; but it is pleasing to them to think there is but one Sabbath in a week; and far more joyous and alive are they at *another* feast than at "the Marriage Supper of the Lamb." 'How unfortunate,' say they, 'is it that the Sacrament is next Sunday,' when in the week preceding an opportunity offers of attending some theatrical performance, a card-club, or any thing of the like *innocent* kind! Alas! for them, they must either forego the Sacrament or their amusement: whichever of the twain they forego, we know full well where their *heart* will be. These followers of the Lord would fain go to heaven—would fain be happy after death: In order to be so, they see clearly that they *must* be religious and continue still to be so; but where is their *willingness* to be so.[k] They know not the freedom which marks the presence of the Eternal Spirit.[l] The

[k] Ps. 110—3. [l] 2 Cor. iii, 17.

Scriptures, perhaps, they read; but not "as a merchant seeking goodly pearls," or as one would search for "a treasure hid in a field." With them, it is a something towards expiating their guilt or buying salvation. They pray too, and their prayer may be 'diligently to keep God's commandments,' 'perfectly to love him, and worthily to magnify his holy Name:' they may even ask Almighty God for 'such a sense of all his mercies' as will constrain them to 'shew forth his praise not only with their lips, but in their lives, by giving up themselves to his service and walking before him in holiness and righteousness all their remaining days;' and yet all this solemnity of expression may be no more than the sound of a tinkling cymbal. Where is their *diligence* to "rule themselves after God's Word?" Where is there—not the perfection of love,[m] but—any real love whatever? If the *Letter* of the Law be observed, how is the *Spirit* of it regarded?—Where is that total surrender of self—body, soul and spirit, to the Lord, which our Church so beautifully and clearly teaches and solicits? Alas! how many "draw nigh to God with their mouth, while their heart is far from him." Peter followed afar off, and so do they. They "follow Jesus in the way:" but halt, go back, and turn to the right hand or to the left, as suits their taste or inclination. Now, as Peter sat, they sit with the Lord at his table; presently, they go into companies of worldly and ungodly people—see Jesus betrayed and crucified afresh, hear his Truth calumniated, and his People mocked: and yet dare not avow their attachment to the one or speak a word in vindication of the other. Know ye not such characters? Do we describe mere ideal persons?—You know we do not: and it is in the temper and conduct of such characters and persons that you may see What is implied in following the Lord afar off.

[m] 1 John iv, 17.

But surely there must be something sadly ensnaring and deceptive that prevents our following the Lord fully. We proceed therefore, to shew

II. *What usually induces any to do so:*—

The circumstances, situations, and events, which operate on the mind and influence the choice of the generality, are various. But, there are, we conceive, two things which, in particular, induce many to follow the Lord afar off: These are—*The fear of man*, and *the love of the world*.

And (1) *the fear of Man*. It is a fact which no true observer of human kind will controvert, that, naturally, man glories in what should shame him, and is ashamed of what should be his glory. This contrariety of principle we inherit from the first transgressor. No sooner had Adam eaten the forbidden fruit but he was ashamed and afraid of his Maker.[a] This shame of God, and its unholy consequent—*fear of man*, are common to our fallen nature. I have no doubt but that one and all of you whom I address can recollect a period in your earthly being when you have felt "ashamed of Christ and of his Word," and *that* through a fearful apprehension of what *man* might think or say of you. This was Peter's case. When it was said to him—"Thou art of them" that believe on Jesus—and again, "This man also was with Jesus"—and again, "Of a truth, this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean"—so ashamed was Peter of his Lord and so afraid of Man's disfavour, that thrice did he disavow any knowledge of his Master, and to his third denial of Him, added "oaths and curses." Alas! may we say, *what is man?* Had Peter gone boldly into the Palace of the High Priest—had he feared God rather than man—had he owned in the person of the persecuted and insulted Jesus the Friend and Saviour of his soul, why, perhaps, he would have

[a] Gen. iii, 7, 10.

shared his Master's sufferings and been taunted and reproached as Jesus was: this he feared; and therefore from the fear of man, Peter followed afar off. And is this case singular? Does it stand the only of its kind in the records of human frailty and weakness? By no means. Half-heartedness in religion is no uncommon thing. Multitudes shrink from a sincere and candid avowal of their faith in Christ. With the pious, they affect piety; with the impious, they forego their piety, and wrapping their talent, for a season, in a napkin, they bury it in the earth, and lose the recollection of a hereafter reckoning, in the pursuit of mere earthly and perishable good. They would attend the ministration of the Truth; but they fear being observed where it is faithfully ministered. They would read and sing and pray in their social visits with each other; but it would be peculiar, and people would make remarks. They would like to have family worship, and perhaps occasionally have it, but a stranger's presence is quite a sufficient pretext for its omission. And whence is this? The *fear of man* is the occasion of it. People follow the Lord; but care not to be known to do so. They would rather "*all* men should speak well of them," forgetful of the "woe" which the friendship of the world too surely induces.[o] They would worship the God of Israel, yet fain be allowed to "bow themselves in the House of Rimmon."[p] It is true, the Scripture says, "Fear not them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do;" but "fear Him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him:"[q] but this portion of the Bible is passed lightly over, and still "in a a sinful and adulterous generation" are many ashamed of their Lord.[r]

(2) But we said *the love of the world* was another thing whereby many were induced to do so. By *the*

[o] Luke vi, 26 [p] 2 Kings v, 18 [q] Luke xii, 4, 5
[r] Mark viii, 38

world is usually meant pleasure, honour, wealth, fame, or whatever else of a worldly kind satisfies the carnal mind: by *the love* of the world is meant a preference of *its* good, to the fear, favour, love, and service of God. The world finds access to our heart by all our senses. Our heart it finds a congenial soil for all its vanities. It is, therefore, pursued with avidity and coveted with earnestness. Personal safety, spiritual peace, yea, the Son of God himself, is sacrificed for the world and the possession of its good. But, the love of the world is not compatible with the love of God. God's express command is—"Love not the world, neither the things of the world."[s] "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world,"[t] and is therefore opposed to God and to his righteous government. Those, then, who will, at any rate, indulge the flesh, gratify the senses, deify (if we may so say) their persons, and bow down to the shrine of ever changeful and insipid fashion, must, as James observes, constitute themselves the enemies of God and of his kingdom.[v] Now, many would fain share the felicity of the Redeemer's servants—bear their palm and wear their crown; but they cannot be prevailed on to forego earthly for Heavenly things, to cease from things below and to set their affections on things above. They would look to the cross of Jesus for redemption from sin, but not, equally with that, for deliverance from this present evil world.[w] "The cup of salvation," they will not refuse; but there is a cup of a widely different kind which they prefer to that. "The songs of Zion" befit the solemnity of the Sabbath; and add a zest to public worship; but *other songs*—songs that swell not with the praises of Jesus Christ—are sweeter to them. They are exceedingly afraid of over-much righteousness, but seldom doubt

[s] 1 John ii, 15 [t] ib. 17 [v] Ch. iv, 4, original
[w] Gal. i, 4

the probability of their not being righteous enough.[x] "Lord, Lord," say they to Jesus Christ; but they do not the things he commands them. 'I believe' in Him is their individual acknowledgement; but "in works they deny him." They would be disciples of Christ; but they must keep friends with the Mammon of Earth. We tell them, and would allure them thither, of a world of immortal glory: Our word, it may be, is heeded for a moment; but there follows no agonizing effort to obtain it.[y] We tell them of Christ, and assure them of the blessedness of those "who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth"—"through evil and through good report" below, and then through the blissful realms of His everlasting kingdom: Perhaps they follow him; but it is coldly, distantly, formally. There is no decisiveness of principle or character. With all their pretences to religion, the root of the matter is wanting. They are still afar off. Zoar is in view: but something wins the attention and obtains the regard, and they linger in the plain that stretches between Sodom and their refuge.[z] "The *love* of money" may well be called "the root" of this evil; and "how *hardly* shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"[a] I think, then, you will allow that *the fear of man* and *the love of the world* are those things which do usually induce people to follow the Lord affar off.

It now only remains to shew

III. *Why we should determine to follow Him fully:*

There are many reasons why we should be determined to follow the Lord fully and unreservedly: mark the following.

It is *dishonourable to God* to follow him afar off. God says, "My son, give me thy *heart*;" He asks its undivided homage. Nothing—nothing whatever,

[x] Matt. v, 20 [y] Luke xiii, 24 [z] Gen. xix, 16
[a] Luke xviii, 22—24.

must rival him in our affections. He veils the glories of his eternal Godhead with humanity, in order to be more accessible to his creatures. He is in Jesus the altogether admirable and lovely—worthy of our supreme regard, our unbounded veneration, our everlastingly increasing love. The alienation of our heart from him must then be dishonourable to him. If we refuse him our heart, or allow him only a subordinate place in our affection, we do "despite unto the spirit of grace," and manifestly value rather man's favourable opinion of us, than the approving judgment of our God. But "who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, or of the son of man which shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?"[d] God is our Father: "if then, says he, I be a Father, where is mine honour?" God is our Master: "if then, says he again, I be your Master, where is my fear?"[e] "*One* is your Master, even Christ."[f] And shall it be thought some great thing to wait on the person and to execute the will of some earthly potentate, and a thing mean and dishonourable to serve the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings? Shall it be grateful to us to speak approvingly of some human master, benefactor, or friend; and shall we shun the mention of the all-glorious, all-gracious Master, Benefactor, and Friend of our souls? No fellow-creature would thank us for a heartless and unwilling service: will the Son of God deem himself honoured by our following him afar off? He bids us to "take up our cross daily and follow him," and tells us we "cannot be his disciples" unless we do so.[g] Not with our lips merely are we to draw nigh to him and to honour him, but with our heart. It is "with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness," and subsequently that "confession is made by the mouth unto salvation."[h] It will avail little to be not *far* from the kingdom of

[d] Isa. li, 12, 13. [e] Mal. i, 6. [f] Mat. xxiii, 10. [g] Luke xiv, 27. [h] Rom. x, 10.

God, if we get no further. It is only by a cordial and entire surrender of ourselves and all our powers to the Lord, and a simple, sincere, and unaffected deference to his will, that we can duly honour him. Peter followed afar off, and how dishonourable to his Master was this conduct! Caleb "followed the Lord fully," and how was the Lord honoured in his servant![j] O Beloved, let these examples admonish us, and be the saying that is written influential on our hearts—"Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."[k]

It is, moreover, *ruinous to our peace* to be undecided in religion. I do not believe we can possibly be happy while we are afar off from Christ. There will be a painful sense of insincerity, and, consequently, a continual apprehension of Divine displeasure. The doubts and fears, the failures and sorrows, of many professed followers of Jesus Christ, may, we conceive, be truly traced to double-mindedness in his service. People may hope by compliance now with the wishes of one party, and anon with the wishes of another, to please all parties, and to keep on friendly terms both with the friends and enemies of the Saviour; but in vain: really and decidedly Christian characters will deem them inconsistent; and the world will not thank them for half their heart. In such a case religion will be *endured* rather than *enjoyed*. Peace of conscience will precariously depend—not on the atonement of the holy Jesus, but—on the favour or disfavour of man. Now, union betwixt light and darkness there can be none: the one will struggle with the other, till the stronger dominates. Christ hath no concord with Belial; and therefore he that believeth should have no part with an infidel.[l] Look at Peter: he would please men; to do so, he thrice denied his Lord. True; "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter," and that look of mingled tenderness and reproof

[j] Deut. i, 36. [k] 1 Sam. ii, 30. [l] 2 Cor. vi, 15.

humbled the fallen Apostle, and brought him to tears of penitential sorrow; but the tears he shed were tears of bitterness—and invariably will the same cause produce the same effect. Distressed soever as ye may be, there is one question which will generally discover to you the occasion of your anguish—'How do you follow the Lord, fully or afar off?'—Let this then be another argument for decisiveness of mind on the side of God and godliness. "*The day of the Lord is near* IN THE VALLEY OF DECISION."[m]

To follow the Lord afar off is, finally, *injurious to the interests of Religion.* It not only detracts from the excellence and satisfactoriness of personal piety, but it seems to say to a world listening ever to catch unfavourable rumours of religion, because glad at all times to find excuses for its negligence and sinfulness—'There is not that in Religion which the Scriptures declare there is, and which some few profess to find in it: We do not find in Christ those unsearchable riches, and in his service those pleasurable joys, which we thought to have found: His kingdom, He tells us, is not of this world; we must, therefore, forego the world we love, and walk by faith in view of a kingdom to us future and unknown. Those who persecuted Him, too, he tells us, will also persecute us: now we would fain reign without suffering with him. And what is more, we must sit at our Master's feet (how humbling!) and there whilst we sit, we must learn of him, notwithstanding all our innate greatness and moral goodness, to be meek and lowly in heart. Following him as we please, does not suffice. With *all* (how hard the requirement!) with ALL our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, must we love him. We must forsake ALL to follow him: on this condition only (how sad!) will he acknowledge us to be his followers. Deny ourselves, and watch, and pray, we must; and that, not statedly (as before a Communion, for in

[m] Joel iii, 14.

stance) but daily, hourly, constantly. You need not, therefore, trouble yourselves much about religion or wish to be very religious. Jesus of Nazareth is a poor man: no worldly honours will reward your following him, and by our following him so distantly, you may see we do not very greatly love him or very abundantly enjoy his favour.' And why, we would know, do you not love him more, and more abundantly enjoy the consolations that are in him? It is simply because you follow the Lord afar off. And can the conduct which says in effect what we have said in words recommend religion? Far from it. It is too true that a reluctant or an inconsistent profession of religion does very material injury to the progress and increase of vital godliness. Our own Church says, 'If any man be a dumb Christian, not professing his faith openly, but cloaking and colouring himself for fear of danger, he giveth men occasion, justly and with good conscience, to doubt lest he have not the grace of the Holy Ghost within him, because he is tongue-tied and doth not speak.'[n] Whereas, let the same individual "*draw nigh* to God," and become "*valiant* for the truth in the earth," how surely will "his zeal provoke very many!" how many will admire in him the religion of Jesus! and how many will possibly be excited to say, "We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you!"[o]

Because then to follow the Lord partially and hesitatingly, is *dishonourable to God, ruinous to our peace*, and *injurious to the interests of religion*, should we, therefore, be determined to follow him fully.

I have now shewn you, as I purposed doing, What is implied in following the Lord afar off, What usually induces any to do so, and Why we should determine to follow him fully.

[n] Hom. for Whitsunday. [o] Zech. viii, 23.

Allow me, in closing, to ENQUIRE,

1. *Do you follow the Lord at all?*

Many did not when he was on earth: many do not now he is in Heaven. The former we deem more excusable than the latter: for the former saw in Jesus only "a man of sorrows;" we know him to be "over all God blessed for ever:" we bear his name; have been, by the ordinance of baptism, admitted into his visible Church; are bound by covenant-engagements not to be ashamed of Christ crucified, but manfully to fight under his banner, against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Now do you feel the nothingness of the *world*, and do you dare its utmost enmity against your Saviour and your adherence to him? Do you mortify the deeds of the *body?* Do you maintain a warfare, offensive and defensive, with your ghostly enemy, the *devil?* And is it possible, by your own conduct and deportment, for all to "take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus?" Certainly, there ought not to be an adult person among you that did not profess to follow the Lord. Peter wept for following him afar off. How bitterly will you weep that follow him not at all! You may choose to find your own ways, and to do your own pleasure; but you will choose those ways and do that pleasure to your ruin. "If, then, the Lord be God, follow him."[p] "Jesus hath left us an example that ye should follow his steps."[q] Then arise and follow him. Come with the Marys to his cross: gaze believingly on Jesus crucified, and gaze till you can feelingly exclaim—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."[r] And again, "My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me."[s] Hence I am led to enquire

[p] 1 Kings xviii, 21. [q] 1 Pet. ii, 21. [r] Gal. vi, 14. [s] Ps. 63. 8.

2. If you are following the Lord, HOW *are you following him?* Is your *heart* in your professed subjection to him? What *motive* influences your conduct? Is your *mind* (as our xvii Art. says) drawn up to high and heavenly things? Do you walk, from really Christian principle, religiously in good works? "Examine yourselves, I pray you, whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves."[t] It will be sad for you to think yourselves *in* the faith, and to be found *out* of it. Following afar off will not suffice. It is awfully dangerous to the soul. "Remember Lot's wife." She was out of Sodom and on the way to Zoar; but she looked, only *looked*, back, and she became the monument of indignation. The Israelites, too, in the wilderness of Sinai proclaimed a feast to Jehovah: but their god was an idol and their feast idolatry. Think too of the Jews—"The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, said they, are we;" but "they were a stiff-necked and gainsaying people." Think of Demas too: Demas was one that followed the Lord: twice is he honourably mentioned in conjunction with Mark and Luke,[v] and yet *Demas* forsook the Apostle Paul, "having loved this present world."[w] Now "these things are our ensamples." They should warn the every Peter among you. They should lead you to pray that prayer "Draw me, and we will *run* after thee."[x] Let Peter in his after zeal, intrepidity, and labour, be to you an example of diligence, fidelity, and love. Heed the advice which, from a personal experience of human weakness and redeeming mercy, Peter gives you;[y] and may our Lord Jesus Christ, "after ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect—*stablish, strengthen, settle* you:"—To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

[t] 2 Cor. xiii, 5. [v] Philem. 24, and Col. iv, 14. [w] 2 Tim. iv, 10.
[x] Can. i, 4. [y] See 1 Epis. v, 9.

DISCOURSE XIII.

CARE FOR THE SOUL.

Psalm 142—4.

No man cared for my soul.

The term 'soul' has various significations in Holy Scripture. In 1 Thess. v, 23, 24, it signifies that mere animal existence which the inferior orders of the creation possess alike with man. It is taken, too, for the whole person, both soul and body; as in Gen. xii, 5, we read that Abram "took the souls which he had gotten in Haran,"—that is, the servants he had purchased and the children which had been born to them —"to go into the land of Canaan." In several places, it must be understood to mean the *life* of man. This is probably the meaning of the term in our text. "No man," says David, "cared for my soul:" that is, no man valued my life, or endeavoured to preserve it. Saul, his father-in-law, was become his persecutor: refuge, David tells us, failed him: with his spirit overwhelmed within him, he fled to the cave of Adullam:[a] there he betook himself to prayer—cried unto the Lord with his voice and poured out his complaint before him; the burden of which was—no man cared for his soul. The term 'soul,' however, is expressive also of man's rational and immortal part.[b] This is its general and common acceptation, and in this sense we shall choose

[a] 1 Sam. xxii. 1. [b] Matt. x, 28.

to use it. Our soul, the wisdom, power, and beneficence of God created: our soul, the blood of Jesus Christ redeemed: our soul, the grace of the Holy Spirit draws, purifies, and exalts. Should not, then, this soul of our's be cared for?—"No man," says the royal Psalmist, "cared for my soul." Nor is the case of the Psalmist singular. An awful carelessness for the soul prevails. This it is our wish to correct, and we have chosen the text before us if haply, by the Divine blessing, we may, in some measure, correct it. I shall say

I. How unusually the soul is cared for.
And II. Why especially it should be cared for.

And I. *How* UNUSUALLY *the soul is cared for* will appear in three or four instances of carelessness for it.

1. How many a *Child* may say—'My parents cared not for my soul: They cared for my body, and for my body's health and preservation: They cared for my temporal comfort; they got me bread to eat and raiment to put on: They cared for me when at any time I lay sick upon my bed; they spared no trouble to do me good and to get me well again: but, they *cared not for my* SOUL.' Now, may not many a child say this? Parents, commonly, are desirous, and very so, to provide for their children; to see them well off in life, and comfortably settled in the world; all which may be harmless and proper in its place; but, when God gives children (for "children and the fruit of the womb are an heritage and *gift* that cometh *of the Lord*,")[c] He says in effect, 'Educate these little immortal beings for me: Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of their Lord: Care for their souls; care for *them* chiefly; care for *them* constantly: Tell them I have redeemed such by the bloodshedding of my Son: Tell them that though they lie the ruined wreck of sin upon

[c] Ps. 127. 3.

that dust whence their earthly tenement was taken, yet that they are capable of a new and a divine nature: Tell them I have prepared for them that love me such good things as pass all human comprehension, and that I require their remembrance of me now in the days of their youth.' But who does this, my Brethren, who? do you yourselves do this?—Few children are, as were Samuel, Jeremiah, and the Baptist John, sanctified from the womb. Of their own souls, they are very generally careless. Their carelessness, however, affords no excuse for the parents not caring for them: but rather a powerful incentive to parental care.

2. How many a *Servant,* too, may say, 'No man careth for my soul.' Servants are, by no means, to be despised on account of their poverty or servitude. Honest servitude is honourable. Our holy and merciful Redeemer "made himself of no reputation and took upon him *the form of a servant.*"[d] "As *one that serveth,*" did He live among men, and in Him have we all "a Master." We cannot say that He cares not kindly for the souls of *his* servants. Would all other Masters cared though it were but a thousandth part as kindly for their servants as Jesus cares for his! Their kindly care, even then, would not be little. But is it not so? may not a servant live now with one master, and then with another, or through successive years with one, and yet no man care for his soul? The temporal comfort and the bodily health of our domestics may be cared for, and perhaps usually *is;* for self-interest and personal convenience will prompt to this: but, what has this to do with the soul, and what bearing has it on that eternally enduring world whither we are going and where the soul is to exist for ever? A servant is as capable of knowledge, holiness, and happiness as a master. "*God* is no respecter of persons." In his sight the soul of a slave is as precious as the soul of the man who may lord it over him. Look

[d] Phil. ii, 7.

into Genesis xviii. 19, and mark the Lord's approval of the patriarch Abraham's "commanding his children and his household after him:" and "the footsteps of our Father Abraham" it will appear to be both our duty and our privilege to follow.[e] It may indeed be said, 'Servants have so much to do; their time is so fully occupied, we see not how or when we are to care for their souls.' And *have* they so much to do? and *is* their time so fully occupied? Then, on these very grounds should masters more assiduously care for their souls. As to *time*, methinks there should be time with every one to *care for the soul*. The soul is to live for ever: and it is *in time* the soul is to be fitted for *eternity*. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap:" if he "soweth to the flesh, he shall of the flesh reap corruption;" and only by "sowing to the Spirit, can he, of the Spirit, reap life everlasting."[f] Besides where there is little *week-day* leisure, there is the whole of the *Sabbath*—that day so mercifully "made for man,"[g] and designed so kindly by the World's great Master to further the best interests of man's better part. It is God's express command that "thy servant may rest as well as thou,"[h] and you cannot needlessly, (observe, I say, *needlessly*) employ a servant about household affairs, worldly business, or manual labour, on the Sabbath without violating the command of God. By the will and word of the Lord, the soul of every man has a right to the Sabbath's hallowed moments, means, and mercies.—It may be said again, 'Servants are untractable:' be it so; in certain instances, they are rude, ignorant, and lawless; but their rudeness, ignorance, and lawlessness, does not affect a Master's duty to care for their souls. A Master most surely ought to possess authority in his own house, and whatever may be the disposition of his dependants, he ought, at least, to *endeavour* the

[e] Rom. iv, 12. [f] Gal. vi, 8. [g] Mark ii, 27.
[h] Deut. v, 14.

spiritual good of all within the sphere of his influence. And I may, I think, dare to say that there *cannot* be a daily reading of God's Word, thankful acknowledgements for mercies received, and prayer for other and more abundant blessings, without good being done. The attention will be roused and won, the mind will be impressed, and it may be, in some favoured instances, the soul will be effectually benefitted. But, even should not these consequences follow, a servant should never have to say, 'No one of all my Masters cared for my soul.'

But, 3. How many a *Neighbour* may say, "No one careth for my soul." If a Neighbour meet with some sad accident, or what we usually call, misfortune, what a concern we all feel for him! how desirous are we to hear the particulars of the event! and how willing, generally, to communicate them unto others! but, who cares for his *soul?* who feels concerned for *that?* Even if it be said a neighbour is "sick unto death," or such an one is dying: 'poor thing,' it is replied; and there the matter rests: but the *soul* is not dying; that is about to pass into the world of spirits, and where there shall be no more death; and who is solicitous about its pardon and justification here, and its safety and acceptance there? The mere manifestation of any carefulness for it, is quite sufficient to displease many:—a doubt of its peace and hope almost criminal uncharitableness. Now, ought this so to be? may we innocently be thus careless for each other's souls?—Let us suppose a plague to be prevailing here: many are dead and others dying: One there is who possesses a remedy suited to the disease—a remedy, which, if imparted and applied, would heal and save the diseased: He refuses or neglects to impart it: Do you think his conduct neighbourly and kind? *No:* and yet a plague is begun amongst us: the dire contagion spreads: many are dead *out of the Lord* and therefore, we are sure, not *blessed;* others are dying daily, and, we may justly fear, "perishing for lack of

knowledge," and yet, O *yet*, how many a perishing soul may say, 'No man cares for me!' Oh! how unkind it is in one that knows the way of salvation and experiences the sweetness of pardoning mercy, not to communicate that knowledge unto others. It is not our's to say with the murderous Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?"[i] We *are* our brother's keeper; "and this commandment have we, that he who loveth God, love his brother also."[k] It should be to us a privelege to do a Neighbour good—spiritual good especially, and, if possible, to win his soul to Christ. If, then, "great things" have been done for you; go home to your house, among your kinsfolk and acquaintance, and tell them Who hath done these things for you, and by you let "the savour of His knowledge be made manifest in every place:"[l] So that a Neighbour whom it is in your power to care for, may not henceforward say,—'No man careth for my soul.'

4, and finally, How many a *Parishioner* may say, 'No Minister careth for my soul!' It is true, we profess to trust that we are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, and called according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, to take the Ministerial Office on us:—we are exhorted, as Messengers, Watchmen, and Stewards of the Lord, to seek for Christ's sheep which are scattered abroad; to teach, to premonish, and to provide for, the Lord's family; and warned, too, of the greatness of the fault and the horrible punishment that must ensue from a neglect of our people's souls;* but where or in whom shall we find all that fervour of spirit, humbleness of mind, kindness of manner, easiness of access, and unreserved devotion of self, strength, and time, which should mark a Minister of Jesus Christ, and the care of immortal souls? Alas! how rarely found is this! How many Parishes we see with

* The Author is aware of having quoted these words before: but he conceives they cannot be too constantly remembered.

[i] Gen. iv, 9, [k] 1 John iv, 21. [l] 2 Cor. ii, 14,

no resident Minister whatever in them: and oftentimes where a Minister resides, is it not too apparent that many a Parishioner may truly say, 'He careth not for my soul?' Seen on the Sabbath for a few hasty minutes, many see no more of their Minister till the Sabbath comes again. Cared for professionally then, they are cared for no more through the greater remnant of the week. How beats the pulse of spiritual life: how fares the soul—whether alive or dead, whether mournful or joyous, whether fed or starved, whether found and safely lodged in the fold of Christ or still a wanderer in 'this naughty world,' is no concern of the gay and worldly minded Minister.* *Think:* and you will not dispute our saying. Many a people now are like the Jews of old—"sheep having *no* Shepherd." Now, I do but notice this in order to excite gratitude for yourselves and sympathy for others. *More than one* Minister have you whose happiness it is to care for your souls:† and,

* How pitiable is it that any one vested with the character and the authority of a Clergyman, should manifest more, far more, care and anxiety about the pedigree of a horse or a dog than for the spiritual birth of his people!—Did the reader ever see 'An Essay on the Signs of Conversion and Unconversion in Ministers of the Church?' By S. C. Wilks, A.M. Printed for Hatchard: Price 3s. See under the head '*recreations*.'

† The People here addressed, the Reader should be aware, were, at this time, under the united (and that people will justify the remark) affectionate care of the late Rev. T. Martyn, Professor of Botany in the University of Cambridge, and the Author. The dear and venerable man alluded to, was wont to say, 'He did not wish to live a day longer than he could do good.' Whilst in a conversation memorable for the spirit, animation, and courtesy, with which it was conducted, Professor Martyn, once said, '*Christ crucified* is the only foundation on which we can trust, take that away, and we sink for ever; but give us *that*, and we are safe;' and declared distinctly, with reference to himself, that the cross of Christ was *his* only hope: it may, at the same time, as strictly applicable to him, be said, "When the ear heard him, then it blessed him; and when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him: because he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him; and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy."* So truly

* Job. xxix. 11—13.

however feeble or unworthy may be our services, I believe there is not so much as one individual of the entire population of our parish that can say, 'our Ministers care not for our souls.' With *self* prostrate in dust and ashes, I would observe that this is no small mercy. Next to the gifts of his Son, his Spirit, and his Word, Almighty God himself could not bestow upon you, this side the eternal World, a greater gift than "a Minister of *his* that will do *his* pleasure,"[m] and whose one sole, simple, and sincere desire it is to "spend and be spent" for your souls. Then, pray ye that your Ministers may indeed be "men of God," and that their care for you all may abound yet more and more.

From the several instances of carelessness for the soul, we have now adduced, you may, I conceive, see clearly, *How* USUALLY *the soul is cared for*. I come to say

II. *Why* ESPECIALLY *it should be cared for.*

There are many and cogent reasons why especially the *soul* should be cared for. Mark the following:

1. The soul should especially be cared for, *Because it is the noblest and most enduring part of the visible creation.* Not till God had created man upon the earth and breathed into him the breath of life, did he behold with supreme complacency all things which he had made, and declare them to be "*very* good."[n] Man was the master-piece of the Eternal's workmanship. If we contemplate the body with its various parts—

in our venerated Pastor and Father did "faith work by love." May the Author further be permitted to observe, our People were emphatically "one." The Church was usually crowded. Communion days were indeed "high days." And though the population of the parish, by the last census, did not exceed 326, yet we numbered 128 communicants—four of whom only did not positively belong to us as parishioners. The life and labours of Professor Martyn closed A.D. 1825.

[m] Ps. 103. 21. [n] Gen. i, 31.

the bones, the flesh, the skin covering it above; the veins, the arteries, the blood in its mysterious flow; the pulsation, and in short, the every thing connected with the human frame, we are constrained to acknowledge ourselves to be "fearfully and wonderfully made." But what comparison bears the body, with all its variety of parts, with the soul—with that rational and immortal spirit that actuates and controuls the whole? It is in what regards the *soul* that "man is but a little lower than the angels."[o] It is the soul that reasons, hopes, fears, recollects, anticipates. It is the soul that is imperishable: the body returns to the dust again; the spirit to him who gave it. Only a spiritual substance thinks; think our soul does; it must therefore be in its nature spiritual; and what is in its nature spiritual must necessarily be immortal. Our's is a "*living soul*"[p] and live it will amidst the decay of nature and after the dissolution of its earthly tenement. If any thing can add weight to the testimony of Scripture on this interesting point, it is that love of life we feel within us and that thrilling shudder which passes sensibly through our mental powers at the thought of ceasing finally and for ever to exist. A dream shews man to be immortal.* And is it not a fact ascertained most truly that through the lapse of years, the particles of our body change, so that the body of the man is not the body of the child, and yet there is in the individual a continued life and a conscious sameness? On what ground can we account for this, if man hath not within him a living and enduring soul?—Because, then, of the soul's essensial and peculiar excellence should it especially be cared for.

2. The soul should especially be cared for *on account of its vast capabilities*. The "soul of a beast," of which in Eccles. iii. 21. we read it "goeth down-

* See a beautiful little Poem on 'Dreaming,' Book II. of Olney Hymns.

[o] Ps. 8. 5 [p] Gen. ii, 7.

ward," soon arrives to its maturity of existence: it reaches a point beyond which it cannot go. Not so a human soul: there comes no period in *its* existence at which it may be said "Hitherto shalt thou go in thy acquisition of knowledge, holiness, and happiness; but no further." No: there will be progress towards the perfection of being to all eternity. And seeing that between a creature and its Creator an infinite distance must for ever obtain, for ever and for ever will the soul be gaining new and glorious accessions of immortal blessedness. A period in eternity may come when the soul that now reasons, thinks, and acts, in one of our frail bodies, will reach the knowledge of a Paul, the lofty fervour of a Son of Amos, the love of a John, and even the almost godlike knowledge, fervour, love, and felicity, of a Gabriel. Of the soul's primeval or hereafter dignity, we cannot now speak particularly. It lies a ruined wreck;—its powers darkened and defiled by sin: but from those powers though darkened and defiled, we judge it capable of new "glory, honour, and immortality." Towards it, there are "thoughts of peace" in Jehovah's heart.[q] In love and in pity will he deliver it.[r] "I called upon thy Name, O Lord," shall many a poor sinner say, "out of the low dungeon: thou hast heard my voice;" shall be the consequent acknowledgement.[s] "Very gracious is the Lord at the voice of our cry;" and though the soul even of a believer may occasionally "cleave to the dust,"[t] yet, as being a "partaker of the Divine Nature," and of spiritual excellence, it shall eventually share a happiness the most exalted and refined. It is promised to "the pure in heart, that they shall see God:"[v] and who can conceive what must be the exquisite and unutterable delight of *seeing* God?—seeing the manifested glory of the Creator's presence? and experiencing therewith a

[q] Jer. xxix, 11. [r] Isaiah lxiii, 9. [s] Lam. iii, 55, 56.
[t] Ps. 119. 25. [v] Matt. v. 8.

transformation of soul into the same image?[x] The things of the Spirit will then be revealed indeed: the mysteries of Providence, of Grace, and Godliness, will form the high subjects of inquiry to the soul through the ever enduring ages of its being: and if so, should the soul whose capabilities are so vast not be especially cared for?

3. It should, moreover, especially be cared for, *because of the price paid for its redemption.* The soul's creation without redemption when fallen and depraved, would prove a curse rather than a blessing: its capabilities, too, would but aggravate its woe. This the soul's Creator knew: He therefore "spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all;" and He finds in the life and work and death of his beloved Son "a ransom for us." When no other price could purchase our redemption, the blood of Jesus Christ availed to expiate our guilt and to procure us mercy. Hence Peter beautifully remarks—"Ye were redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus,"[y] Though, then, we may see somewhat of the soul's worth in its nature and from its powers of understanding, memory, and enjoyment; yet it is in 'the agony and bloody sweat, in the cross and passion' of its Redeemer that we may most clearly discern its value. We may add to "the kingdoms of this world and all the glory of them," the riches of a thousand worlds like our's, and they would not equal in value a single soul. It would cost more to redeem it. Nothing short of the blood of the incarnate God could effect its redemption, and make manifest the grace which bringeth salvation to it. And should that for whose recovery to its original, and more than its original, greatness, such wondrous means are devised, not be cared for? Shall souls be precious in God's sight and of no value in our's? Do we not see from a consideration of the price paid

[x] 2 Cor. iii, 18. [y] 1 Epis. i, 18, 19.

for their redemption, why especially we ought to care both for our own and others' souls?

And 4. The soul should especially be cared for, *because if lost it will remain lost and unredeemed for ever.* It was here our nature became depraved; it is here our condition must be changed: it is here we fell from the grace given us in Adam; it is here we must be raised again by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here, or no where, now or never, must we be delivered from curse and damnation, (I use the language of our Church, Art. xvii,) and be brought by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. A soul may pray in Hell—"I pray thee, father Abraham"—is one represented as saying there; but its prayer will avail it nothing.[a] Others may pray for it; but equally unavailing with its own, will be their prayers. Hence the propriety of the Prophet's counsel, "*Seek ye the Lord* WHILST HE MAY BE FOUND, *call ye upon him* WHILST HE IS NEAR."[b] Now is the day of the Redeemer's power; now is he exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentence and the remission of sin to his Israel: now, therefore, "every one that asketh receiveth; he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh the door shall be opened."[c] Then "ask, and *you* shall have; seek and *you* shall find; knock and the door shall be opened unto *you*." Let the soul be cared for: time is on the wing: moments steal swiftly by: eternity approaches: through all its ever coming ages "there will be none to redeem" the soul once lost: woe, perpetual woe, will agonize its every power: unforgiven sin will mar its peace for ever: its immortality will be its curse, and those powers which should have been employed in the knowledge, love, and service of their gracious Donor, will prove but so many sources of aggravated and unceasing sorrow to their guilty and condemned possessor. Surely, then,

[a] Luke xvi, 25. [b] Isaiah lv, 6. [c] Matt. vii, 7.

here is another and a powerful reason why we should care especially for our souls.

And now I have said How usually the soul is cared for, and Why especially it should be cared for,—I will only ADDRESS a few words, first, to all generally, and then, to some few particularly.

And 1. *To all generally,* I say, Whoever may not care for your souls, care for them yourselves. Let each one of you care for his own soul. Learn to appreciate its value. See of what it is capable. "Commune with your own heart and be still."[b] In the stillness of thought, let "your spirit make diligent search." Meditate on all the great and glorious truths of Scripture: meditate especially on God. It is allowed that converse with superiors tends to elevate the mind and to refine the manner:—much more will this result from "fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." Think, too, on the "many great and exceeding precious promises" God hath given us. It is by exercising faith on these that you are to "purify yourselves from all filthiness both of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God."[c] If, at any time, you feel burdened with a sense of sinfulness, say with David, "Lord be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee."[d] If, at any time, your spirit within you be overwhelmed with sorrow, encourage yourselves in the Lord, as David did, and say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him who is the help of my countenance and my God."[e] If other refuge fail you, betake yourselves to prayer. If ye be persecuted for righteousness sake, remember Who declares you "blessed." If ye be joyous and happy in the fear and favour of your Lord, acknowledge the source of your happiness.[f] When the World would

[b] Ps. 4. 4 [c] 2 Cor. vii, 1. [d] Ps. 41. 4.
[e] Ps. 42. 5. [f] Ps. 23. 3.

win your hearts from God, and allure you by its specious good from the paths of watchfulness and care, say to its tempting vanity—"My soul is as a weaned child;"[f] weaned from the world, my soul affects a better portion: no present good can satisfy my soul's desires: they go beyond the bounds of time, and range the periods of infinity: the *Lord*, therefore, *is*, and can only be the satisfying portion of my soul. "He shall guide me by his counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."[g] Thus though no man may care for your souls—no father, master, neighbour, or minister, yet may you care for them yourselves, and rejoice ever and continually in him who careth unweariedly for "the souls that seek" and love him.

2. *To some particularly*, I say, Ye that are *Parents*, care for the souls of your children. Seek for them "first," before any other good whatever, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Do so in the believing hope that other and needful things shall be added to these greater mercies. Say not as is too commonly said to children, 'There's a *good* child:' Good, comparatively and morally, children may be; but good spiritually none are, save by the grace and spirit of Jesus Christ. Tell them, rather, how naturally proud, envious, and wicked even *their* hearts are.[h] Tell them how holy God is, and therefore how hateful sin must be to him. Tell them of Jesus, and how tenderly he cares for the "*little children*" who love him. Speak to them of his Spirit, and the Spirit's office in the economy of redemption. Let the Bible be their best book, and prayer their daily exercise: And let your parental care be stimulated and encouraged by the saying, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it."[i] And ye *Masters*, care for the souls of your servants. A master

[f] Ps. 131. 2. [g] Ps. 73. 24. [h] See Prov. xxii, 15. [i] Prov. xxii, 6.

should be the priest of his own household. Your dependants are providentially committed to your care, as ye are ministerially to our's. Then let us be agreed to care for our respective charges "as those who must give account" of their stewardship to the one great and universal "Lord of all." Give to your servants the Sabbath, and bring them with you to "the House of Prayer." Second our labours: aid us in our all-important duties. "Let brotherly love continue," and all our *neighbours*, whom we can benefit, share our kind and zealous care. Let our religion be the prevalence of love: and then will the guardian care of our soul's only Lord and Master be over us, and our work given us to do being accomplished, Jesus Christ will receive our departing spirits with a—"Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

DISCOURSE XIV.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER CONSIDERED.

1 Corinthians xi, 24.

This do in remembrance of Me.

Not until he had communicated "all things which he had heard and received of the Father"—not until he had invited "the weary and heavy laden" to himself, and proved his power "to forgive sin" and to "save to the uttermost"—not until he had vanquished "the principalities and powers of darkness" and "triumphed openly over them," did our adorable Redeemer "bow his head and yield up the ghost." "*It is finished!*" was his exclamation on the cross. And what was finished? "The work which was given him to do"—the mighty and mysterious work of our redemption. This finished, our Lord just went down into the grave to sanctify the resting place of his believing members—thence he quickly rose, made the clouds his chariot, and went to repossess "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was." "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle."[a] And now that

[a] Ps. 24. 7, 8.

our Lord Jesus Christ "hath overcome, and is seated with the Father on his throne," can we suppose him forgetful of the conflict which he once sustained? Does he cease to remember Calvary? No; most surely not: as "a Lamb that *had been slain*" did he appear in the mystic visions of the Apocalypse to the beloved John.[b] Should those then whose griefs he bare, and for whose sins he was "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted," be forgetful of his 'agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion?' Oh! no: and to aid our memory of himself and the love wherewith he loved us, our Lord has appointed a peculiar ordinance: this ordinance we are enjoined to celebrate; and the command which enjoins our celebration of it forms our text: "*This do in remembrance of Me:*" and now we shall inquire,

I. What it is to do:
II. What is required in us worthily to do it:
And III. What are, commonly, the excuses made for not doing it.

Let us inquire

I. *What it is to do:*—

"*Do this:*" and what is *this* we are to do? We read, "The same night in which he was betrayed, Jesus took bread; and when he had given thanks, he blessed it, and gave to his disciples, saying, take, eat; this is (to represent to you) my body, which is (to be) broken for you: do this in remembrance of me. Likewise also he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, drink ye all of it: for this is (to represent to you) my blood, (which is) the blood of the New Covenant, and which is (to be) shed for many for the remission of sins: this do ye, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of Me."[c] Thus was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained.

[b] Rev. v, 6. [c] Comp. Matt. xxvi, 26 with 1 Cor. xi, 23, &c.

That it was to be a continued and repeated ordinance in the Christian Church is, we may *first* observe, plain: Our Lord's command is "*Do this;*" and he evidently wished and purposed its continuance by saying "*as oft*" as ye do it. The *circumstances* under which the ordinance was instituted, are peculiarly interesting and solemn. It was night; it was "*the* night;" the night of the Lord's betrayal. Jesus sat with his few disciples gathered round him. They were witnessing the last words, the last looks, the last actions, of their beloved Master. Judas was covenanting to betray him: this he knew and intimated to the eleven. Sorrow filled their hearts, and "the hour" of their Lord's severest woe was come. Blood and agony and death awaited the resigned and lowly Saviour. He was about to tread, alone and unsupported by human aid, "the wine-press of the wrath of Almighty God," and to sustain the burden of the world's atonement. "With strong cries and tears" was he now to contend for the recovery and salvation of our lost and perishing souls. With this scene full before him did Jesus take the bread and cup and bless them, and say to his mourning followers "Eat ye, drink ye, all of these; and this do ye in remembrance of Me." Perhaps the *elements of bread and wine* were chosen as being most easy to procure, and as being also the most striking emblems of his body broken, and his soul poured out, for sin. As bread and wine nourish and sustain our animal nature, so do the body and blood of Christ nourish and sustain our immortal soul. Perhaps, too, the choice of these things rather than others might be designed to shew the union which subsists between the faithful.* You know a loaf consists of grains once separate and apart

* The Author believes himself to be indebted for this idea, and possibly for some other ideas contained in this discourse, to the Rev. Edward Bickersteth's "Treatise on the Lord's Supper." That and the Rev. D. Wilson's "Address to Young Persons previous to their *first* communicating," he has ever found particularly useful among his people.

one from the other, and wine is the produce of many grapes: so are all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity "one" in him and with each other.[d] However wide apart may be the lands of their natural birth; and however different may be the forms of their religion, yet are they "all one in Christ," and a communion of a sweet and a gracious kind prevails among them.—The *design* of this sacred rite was especially to perpetuate the memory of our Saviour's death. He knew how earthly our affections were, and how easily we forget God: He knew, too, that our happiness would consist in the recollection of his dying love: He therefore said, "*Do this*"—'Do this, my people: I feel towards you desire and love unutterable: I do earnestly remember you: You shall not be forgotten of Me: Pledges of my remembrance shall await your acceptance: A something you may do that shall always remind you of Me: Myself you shall spiritually eat and drink; and whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' Shall we call this "*a hard saying?*" Shall we not rather willingly and gratefully *do this* which Jesus bids us in remembrance of him? Oh! if he had bidden us do some *great* thing, methinks we should have done it: how much more, then, when he says—"Do this: remember Me!"

Let us now inquire

II. *What is required in us worthily to do it:*—

Agreeably to the catechism of our Church, there is required in those who partake of her communion, (1.) *Repentance towards God;* (2.) *Newness of life:* (3.) *Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ:* (4.) *Thankfulness for his death:* and (5.) *Charity with all men.*

And (1.) *Repentance towards God.* By *repentance* is meant a wish to undo, if it were possible, what we

[d] Gal. iii, 28.

have done amiss; sincere sorrow for our fault, and unfeigned humiliation of soul on account of it. This repentance has a particular reference *to God*, because it is *his* authority we have questioned, *his* Law we have violated, *his* goodness and mercy we have abused. Hence holy Scripture describes a "*godly sorrow*" which worketh a repentance not to be repented of.[e] This is the repentance which we need in order to sit acceptably at the Lord's table. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." It is "the broken and contrite heart" which God doth not despise. This brokenness and contrition of heart is the gift of Jesus Christ, and the fruit of spiritual influence on our mind.[f] And are there *none* to whom I speak who "sorrow after a godly sort?"—*none* to whom the grace of repentance and the spirit of conviction have been imparted?—*none* who "abhor themselves and repent in dust and ashes?" O yes, I trust there are some poor prodigals among you coming to themselves, and purposing in the bitterness of their souls to arise and return to their Father—some self-condemned publicans "standing afar off," not daring so much as to look heaven-ward, but smiting upon their breasts, and crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner"—some weeping Magdalens who would wash a Saviour's feet with their tears. Well, then, you have the *first* thing required in us worthily to eat of that bread and to drink of that cup of which Christ invites you to partake. But there is required

(2.) *Newness of life.* Newness of life it is which alone evidences repentance to be real and sincere. If repentance be an earnest desire to undo, if it were possible, what we have done amiss, we shall not surely love to repeat the fault. This I wish you particularly to observe, because the repentance of the generality allows them to live in sin: than which no clearer proof can be afforded of the falseness and inutility of their

[e] 2 Cor. vii, 10. [f] See Acts v, 31. John xvi, 8.

repentance. When Jesus Christ bestows sensibility of conscience and a tender sorrow for sin, he disposes the sinner utterly to "abhor that which is evil." "Hunger and thirst after righteousness" mark invariably the presence and grace of the Eternal Spirit. In whomsoever this hunger and thirst are produced, there will be a stedfast purpose and endeavour to "perfect holiness in the fear of God." "The flesh" indeed will "lust against the spirit;" but, in its turn, the spirit will lust against the flesh.[g] And though a truly penitent person cannot always "do the things which he would," yet is there a determination of mind within him to "take heed to his ways and to rule himself after God's Word."[h] And is it not the purpose and desire of some of you, Beloved, to amend your lives, and to evidence the reality of your penitence by "fruits meet for it?"—Then have you the *second* thing you need worthily to do what Jesus Christ commands you. There is required

(3.) *Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.* The Spirit testifies of Jesus,[i] and "this is God's commandment that we believe on his Son Jesus Christ."[k] The *means* of faith are, hearing the Word and prayer.[l] In their use, "the mourner in Zion" lays hold—tremblingly, it may be, at first—on Christ, is led gradually to "rejoice in hope," and eventually to see how suited to his soul's necessities is the Saviour God hath given him. 'God's mercy through Christ' is the ground whereon the sole of his foot finds rest. Therein his faith, however lively, becomes, by habitual exercise, livelier still. Christ is received as he is revealed. The believing penitent receives him as his Prophet to instruct, his Priest to atone, and his King to rule over and within him. By faith we "put on," "walk in," "live on," "joy in," Jesus Christ. It is the grace which bears a peculiar reference to a worthy reception of the

[g] Gal. v, 17. [h] Ps. 119. 9. [i] John xv, 26.
[k] 1 John iii, 23. [l] Rom. x, 17. Luke xvii, 5.

Lord's Supper. 'The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and a spiritual manner; and the *mean* whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is *faith*.'[m] None receive the Communion rightly, or worthily, who do not *with faith* receive the same. 'The wicked and such as be void of a lively faith, although they may visibly and carnally press with their teeth (as Augustine says) the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, yet *in no wise* are *they* partakers of Christ.' It is faith that "discerns the Lord's body, looks through and beyond the shadow to the substance, through and beyond the sign to the thing signified." 'The Faithful' alone are really partakers of it: but, "all men have not faith,"[o] and it may be some to whom I speak are doubtful whether their faith be "the faith of (or *by*, more properly) the operation of God," or that mere notional assent of the many which avails nothing whatever to the peace and safety of the soul. But do you *wish* rightly to believe? *Use* ye the means of faith? *Would* you obey the first and great commandment of the Gospel? Would you work *that* work of all other works the greatest in itself and the noblest in its consequences,—*would you* BELIEVE *on Jesus Christ?*[p] *Feel* you *any* obligation to a dying Saviour, and *would* you feel *more* deeply obligated? IF YOU WOULD, you have faith: and though it may be "weak" and "small as a grain of mustard seed," yet the inviting voice of Mercy is, "Come unto Me." We conclude, then, you have the *third* thing required worthily to do what Jesus Christ commands you. But there is required

(4.) *Thankfulness for his death.* And can this be wanting where there is an unaffected sorrow for sin; a sincere purpose to avoid it, and a 'lively faith in Christ our Saviour?' If a fellow creature do us an act of kindness, how commonly do we feel our mind pervaded

[m] Art. xxviii. [n] Art. xxix. [o] 2 Thess. iii, 2. [p] John vi, 29.

with a sense of thankfulness! And shall we feel less in the recollection and contemplation of a Saviour's everlasting kindness towards us? "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his *friends*:"[q] but, "while we were yet *sinners*, in due time, Christ died for the *ungodly*."[r] Then, how great must his love be! And shall not a Redeemer's love, and that love evidenced in dying for us, excite our gratitude?—The ordinance which commemmorates 'the exceeding great love of our Lord and only Master', requires our 'most humble and hearty thanks to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and Man, and the redemption of the world thereby:' and it is while we surround his board that, with more than usual fervency, we should say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy Name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thy sins, and healeth all thy diseases: Who redeemed thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercy."[s] And feel you nothing of this adoring thankfulness? I know you feel not a thousandth part of the thankfulness which you should feel: but is it in your heart to say, "O Lord, I *would* praise thee?" Then come and welcome to the supper of your Lord,—come and welcome to that gracious Lord who will meet you with the words—"Thou didst well in that it was in thine heart" to thank me.[t] With this disposition of heart you have the *fourth* thing required in order worthily to do what your Lord commands you in remembrance of him. The last thing required is

(5.) *Charity with all men.* The Communion of the body and blood of Christ is a Feast of love. No enmity must approach to mar its loveliness. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest

[q] John xv, 13. [r] Rom. v, 8. [s] Ps. 103. 1. 4.
[t] 1 Kings viii, 18.

that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way: *first* be reconciled to thy brother, and *then* come and offer thy gift."[v] But there cannot, surely, be love to the Lord Jesus Christ and an unkindly feeling towards a brother prevalent in the same heart together. No: the one would extirpate the other. It pertains to the Christian to "love his enemies; to do good to them that hate him; and to pray for them which despitefully use him and persecute him." Nor is it any "*strange* work" with him to do so. He is *disposed* to do it, and it is matter of unfeigned joy to him when he can "overcome evil with good," and by heaping coals of fire (that is winning and softening kindnesses) on his head, he can make a foe his friend.[w] The religion of Jesus is a religion of benevolence. Love is its essence. Its Author is "love;" and lovely, kind and forgiving, will be all its sincere and devout professors. In their love, they will embrace "*all* men;" and should an *enemy* hunger, they will feed him, if he thirst, they will give him drink." Those of you who would do so, possess the *fifth* and final thing you need to come worthily to the Supper of the Lord.

Where, then, there is repentance towards God, newness of life, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, thankfulness for his death, and charity with all men, there is *What is required in us worthily to do* what Jesus our Lord commands us when he says *Do this.*

We have now to inquire

III. and finally, *What are, commonly, the excuses made for not doing it.*

Many and various are the excuses made for not partaking of the holy Sacrament. We shall notice only those which most commonly prevail. And here let me say, Mark the several excuses as we name them and see which of them is your own.

[v] Matt. v, 23. [w] Rom. xii, 20.

Much business and occupation in the world, is a plea with many persons for their neglect of the Lord's Supper. But is this excuse allowable? May a man innocently give "all diligence"—to provide for the temporal wants of himself and family rather than—"to make his calling and election sure?" Is it impossible to be at the same time "diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord?" "Will it profit you to gain the whole world" at the sacrifice of your soul, and your soul's salvation? May you take this plea with you to the judgment seat of Christ? Would it aught avail you there? No: and better had a man forego a part, at least, of his worldly care and toil, rather than not do what Jesus Christ commands him.

We do not feel that perfect charity towards all which we ought to feel, is another excuse with some. You should muse then on the love of Jesus till the fire of charity be kindled in your bosoms and every "root of bitterness" be consumed within you. What! shall we be forgiven our ten thousand talents, and yet refuse to forgive a fellow-debtor ten? "Why do ye not rather take wrong?" "He" who loved us while we were yet his enemies, "was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth" to say he felt no charity towards us. He prayed for his murderers. Restrain then and lament that vile propensity of our sinful nature to retain implacably a sense of wrong. Look to the cross: Think Who hung thereon: Feel but your obligation to a Saviour, and refuse to be in perfect charity with all men *if you can.*

Another excuse is, *We are unworthy to come to the Communion.* If your acceptance there depended on *your* worthiness, this excuse might with some propriety be pleaded. But it *does not.* 'We do not presume to come to our Redeemer's Table trusting in our *own* righteousness.' The more deeply and sensibly we are acquainted with the deep depravity of our heart and our consequent unworthiness, the more fit are we for this and every other mean of grace. It is the sick man

that needs a Physician. Jesus Christ cannot heal those who believe themselves to be already whole. He is the Saviour only of "sinners:" it is *them* he calls "to repentance" and in *them* alone can he see "of the travail of his soul." The (spiritually) "poor, and maimed, and halt and blind," he invites to his Supper. "The (spiritually) naked, and miserable, and wretched," he "counsels to buy of him gold tried in the fire and white raiment, that they may be clothed." And so peculiarly gracious and merciful is the Lord, that he sells the privileges and hopes of his kingdom "*without* money and *without* price" on the part of "the poor destitute." We fear, however, that where the excuse of unworthiness is made for neglect of the Sacrament, there commonly, the least unworthiness is felt. It is the rag through which the heart's foul pride appears. Whereas, for the really unworthy, the sensibly sinful, "all things are ready," and the servants of the Lord are abroad to say, 'Come to the feast."

Others again say, *They are afraid of not being able, after receiving the Communion, to live up*, as they express it, *to what they profess*. Now I mean not to say that fear, under proper restriction and regulation, does not conduce to watchfulness and diligence, and that it becomes not professors of religion to "walk circumspectly:" but the fear which many plead as excusing their approach to the Lord's Table, is ill-timed and unnecessary. Do they fear not 'living up to' the sentiments of the Lord's Prayer, or any other of the many beautiful prayers of our Church? You call God your 'Father'; Jesus Christ your 'Lord'; and pray for 'the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.' You profess to believe in each person of the eternal Trinity, and to 'give yourselves up' to the service of the one Jehovah —and *that* at all times and in every service of the Church: Can you do more in partaking of the Lord's Supper? Depend upon it, there is no more professed at that, than there is every time you say "Our Father which art in Heaven." If in the "Spirit of adoption."

you can call God your Father, and you would "walk with" him, dependent on his goodness, power, and love, "as dear children," the body and blood of Christ will so strengthen and refresh your souls as to enable you to "keep yourselves unspotted from the world," and to maintain a conversation in it "according to the Gospel of Christ."

An excuse of another kind—not often indeed made in word, but often, we believe, latent in the heart, is, *We must live and act differently from what we now do, if we receive the Sacrament.* We do most certainly expect a consistent life and conduct in those who keep the Christian Passover. We can allow no flagrant sin in a professed disciple of Jesus Christ to remain unrebuked. But those who do not live agreeably to the Word and Will of God, most conclusively evince that they have no real love to his Word and Will in their hearts. If you love sin, and be unwilling to have your enjoyment of it restrained, you cannot be 'meet partakers of God's holy Table.' And if you live in sin,—it is the word of Jesus Christ himself,—*ye shall die in it*,[x] and that, observe, whether you partake of the Lord's Supper or not. A *forced* participation of it, is a mockery of its Founder and a profanation of the ordinance. No *unwilling* guest can be a welcome one. We ask not, then, *your* presence there till you feel the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and are desirous to "be holy as He which hath called you is holy."

The excuse of others is, *Some do take the Sacrament, who do not*, as you conceive, *live accordingly; this hinders your so doing.* An inconsistent profession of religion is lamentable in any. But, I ask, Are we the Judge of inconsistent Professors? Are they to stand or fall at our tribunal? Because some do ill, is that to afford a pretext for your not doing better? Perhaps while you are censuring and condemning them, they are renewing their attendance at the altar and re-

[x] John viii, 24.

peating their supplications there for grace and strength whereby to controul their passions and to subdue their sins. Without, by any means, apologizing for inconsistency of conduct in religious professors, we yet think it to be the bounden duty of all who desire to keep up a lively sense of God's mercy in Christ, to commemorate thus the Saviour's dying love; and however others may act, to lose no opportunity of avowing ourselves on the Lord's side: If, then, the lives of others offend you—be ye yourselves purer and more brilliant "lights," and let us "take knowledge of *you*, that *ye* have been with Jesus," by your "abounding in every good word and work."

A further excuse which some make for neglecting totally the ordinance of the Lord's Supper—(though, blessed be God, it is not, I trust, in *your* power to make it)—is, *The unworthiness of their Minister*: 'our Minister (say some) is so and so, and does so and so; and we cannot, therefore, comfortably receive the Sacrament at his hands.' Where this remark is founded in truth, it is allowedly a most painful circumstance. It certainly does detract from the pleasure of the ordinance:* but, be it observed, 'the *effect* of the ordinance is not taken away by the wickedness of a Minister, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as rightly and by faith do receive the sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual because of Christ's institution and promise, *although* they be ministered by evil men.'[y] A Minister's unworthiness, then, cannot be allowed as an excuse for a neglect of the Lord's Supper. The mantle of love should be thrown

* And *not a little*. For however poor and illiterate a People may be, they look for, and rightly so, proprietv and consistency in a Minister. Fidelity, assiduity, attention, &c. &c. are invariably looked for in the legislative and medical professions. Wherefore should these things be dispensed with in the ministerial profession? Is it seemly to go from a card table, a fox chase, or a ball-room, to the celebration of 'holy mysteries?'

[y] Art. xxvi.

over the failures of the *man*, and the *office* he sustains be respected. Still is the great "Master of the Feast," by his Word and Spirit, among his believing followers "as one that serveth." "THOU *meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness:—those that remember thee in thy ways.*" "*While the* KING *sitteth at his table,*" well may "the spikenard" of his guests "send forth the smell thereof" in its sweetest and most grateful odours.[a]

But another and a frequent excuse for delay is, *We mean to come, but we must make ourselves more fit for the ordinance ere we can take it. Meaning* to do a thing is not *doing* it. Besides, "the preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord." Make yourselves better you cannot: you have no ability to do it: and even if you had, and could make yourselves fit to receive the Sacrament, it would be like healing yourselves, if ye were sick, and then going to a physician for advice. This excuse will commonly be found the excuse of ignorance and negligence. When any *really* FEEL that there is 'no health in them,' that they are INDEED unholy and 'miserable sinners,' they are just in that very state of mind in which alone they can receive "health and cure."[b] "The weary and heavy-laden" Jesus invites to come; and whosoever cometh thus weary of sin and heavy-laden with guilt, Jesus will in no wise "send empty away."

The excuse we have reserved finally to notice, is the excuse which, perhaps, of all others most commonly prevails, *If we eat and drink unworthily, we shall eat and drink damnation to ourselves.* These words, you will find, occur in the chapter whence our text is taken. They are truly weighty and solemn in their import; but, I apprehend, people are much mistaken about it, and very needlessly alarmed concerning eating and drinking unworthily. The word "damnation" in the xi ch. of the 1 Cor. does not mean the

[a] Isaiah lxiv. 5. [a] Cant. i, 12. [b] Jer. xxxiii. 6.

pains of eternal death, but merely *judgment*, and is so rendered in other parts of Scripture. This judgment means some *temporal calamity*, and for their abuse of his ordinance did God inflict some temporal judgment on the Corinthians. It was usual with the earlier converts to the Christian faith, and possibly with the Corinthians themselves, to bring each his own bread and wine to where the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered. Hence the elements were more than sufficient; and it sometimes happened the communicants ate and drank to excess, This certainly was "not to discern the Lord's body"—not to prefer the thing signified to the thing signifying it. "*For this cause* many were sickly and weak among them," and many had either fallen into a cold and spiritless state of soul, or been visited with death for their sin. This was the judgment sent upon them. It is not, then, possible for us to eat and drink unworthily *as* the Corinthians did. *Now*, therefore, if any eat and drink unworthily, it is when they eat and drink ignorantly, formally, and for some mere secular end or worldly interest—without penitence, without faith, without thankfulness, without love, without, in short, a full and entire surrender of self and all the powers of self, to the "Alpha and Omega" of the rite. Where any are fearful, apprehensive of danger, and dread to receive unworthily, they should consult their Minister,* inquire, and meditate. They would then soon learn how futile and insufficient is the excuse we are noticing. Numbers there are who "live without God

* The Rubrick requires 'so many as intend to communicate to certify their names to the Minister, at least some time the day before.' This is seldom enjoined, and would not be always practicable. The Author invariably requires a notice of any one's intention to communicate, previous to *first* communicating. Many advantages attend this plan. Not one of the many whom he has admitted to communion ever disputed his authority in the matter. Delightful interviews has he enjoyed with many whom the grace of God constrained to ask—"What shall I do to be saved?"

in the world," and whose religion—if it may be called *religion* at all—consists in mere exterior decency of character, who yet fear no 'damnation.' Speak to them of the Communion, and tell them Jesus Christ said, "Do this"—'O they dare not do it; they fear eating and drinking damnation to themselves.' Be it, however, remembered that *any* sin unrepented of and unremitted through the sacrifice of the death of Christ, will assuredly condemn a sinner. And I will leave it with you to judge whether an habitual neglect of the Communion be not an habitual violation of a plain command.

Such, then, are the excuses commonly made for not partaking of the Lord's Supper. I confess, I feel almost ashamed to have noticed so many. That there should be any excuse whatever for not complying with the dying request of a Redeemer, strongly evinces the ungrateful baseness of our wicked heart. That Redeemer only desires our happiness in our remembrance and love of himself; and yet how many willingly forget him, and even dare to excuse their willing forgetfulness of him! Surely when the words "Do this in remembrance of Me," meet their eye or tingle in their ear, they must feel a sentence of guiltiness and condemnation in their conscience. And *not* to do what we are so plainly bidden, will surely issue in, "*Depart from me; I know you not.*"

We have now enquired, What it is to do, when our Lord and Saviour says, *Do this;* What is required in us worthily to do it; and What are, commonly, the excuses made for not doing it. I would only further ADD

1. A word of *Caution.*

To those of you who are about shortly to communicate for the first time,* I would say, Guard against

* There was not ONE Communion during the years the Author assisted Professor Martyn in the cure of his People without an *addition* to the previous number of Communicants.

every thing like distressing fear. You have indeed been "children of disobedience," but ye are coming to receive the testimony of a Father's pardon and a Father's blessing. "Ye are not coming unto the mount (Sinai) that might not be touched, and that burned with fire; nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest:—but ye are coming unto mount Zion, the city of the living God, the new Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, who are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling."[c] No longer "aliens," ye are to be "fellow-citizens with the saints." Sinful ye may be; but there is virtue sufficient in the blood of Jesus to "sprinkle your heart from an evil conscience." Come, then, to the communion of his body and blood *humbly*, not *doubtingly*. Come as she came who washed her Saviour's feet with her tears, and that Saviour will receive you graciously. Look to him as did the dying Thief and say, "Lord, remember me!" and he will smile in mercy on you and say, "*I do earnestly remember thee still;*[d] *and thou shalt never be forgotten of Me*"[e] Pray him to give you "a cool spirit;"[f] and with a mind serious, humble, contrite, composed, "come to the marriage." As to 'Preparation books,' there are few you can use with profit. The Communion Service of our Church is the *best* Preparation book I know of. Read and study *that*. Get but hold of its meaning, catch but the fervour of its spirit, and you cannot but be worthy partakers of that holy Table. To this word of caution, I add

2. A word of *Advice:*

To those who have communicated, and regularly do

[c] Heb. xii, 18—24. [d] Jer xxxi, 20. [e] Isa. xliv, 21. [f] Prov. xvii, 27.

communicate, I say, Trim anew the lamp of your profession: Gird up anew the loins of your mind: Seek to be 'full-filled with the grace and heavenly benediction' of your Lord. "He giveth *more* grace;" "ask and receive that your joy may be full." "Be careful to give no offence in any thing." Seeing how pleased many are to find an excuse for *their* negligence in the misconduct of *others*, "be sober, be vigilant," and earnestly solicitous to "cut off occasion from those who seek occasion" to slander you and to excuse themselves. "By *well*-doing, put to silence the ignorant remarks of foolish men." Let it rejoice your hearts to see others that were once "afar off, brought nigh by the blood of Jesus." Welcome them to your Master's Table. "Love as Brethren; be pitiful; be courteous:" and the God of love make the remembrance of Christ's death a source of ever-continually increasing pleasure to your souls!

DISCOURSE XV.

CONSIDERATION OF THE LORD'S MERCIES ENFORCED.*

1 Samuel xii, 24.

For, consider how great things he hath done for you.

Consideration at all times becomes us, but especially so at a season like the present. The present is a season commemorative of events the most wonderful that mark the annals of the world. We cannot (I conceive) but approve the wisdom of our Reformers in continuing to the Church a day expressly designed to commemorate them. The day, we allow, is not of Divine appointment; but surely all who love our Lord Jesus Christ must feel pleased, and gratefully so, to have a special and peculiar time appointed in which, with more than ordinary devotion, to consider the great things which God in his beloved Son hath done for us. If the prophet Samuel could say to Israel when the

* This Discourse was delivered on a Christmas Day morning, and immediately preceding a Communion. A people's mind, in the Author's judgment, ought ever to be prepared for the celebration of the Lord's Supper by a suitable Discourse preceding it. Great good attends the practice. The Ordinance, it will be found, sinks in estimation and becomes a mere formal customary thing, where little or no mention is made of its appointment, design, and use. It will not weary a Christian People to hear a frequent mention of Christ. "*We preach Christ crucified*," said Paul of himself and his fellow-labourers: Can their successors do better?

Lord God had given them a king, passed by their iniquity, and vouchsafed them many sweet assurances of his mercy,—"Consider how great things God hath done for you:" with no less propriety may the Minister of "the true Israel" take up the Prophet's words and say,—"Consider what great things he hath done for YOU." We purpose to enquire

I. What great things the Lord hath done for you,
And II. Why you should consider them.

Let us enquire

I. *What great things the Lord hath done for you:*

Here I must observe, it will be impossible to enumerate "the multitude of his mercies:" I shall therefore only glance at the most gracious and peculiar.

Of the many and great things the Lord hath done for you, this is the first and greatest—*He hath chosen you to be his people.* Just as he chose Israel of old to be a special people to himself,[a] so hath he chosen you.[b] Ye that were not a people, are now a people: It hath pleased the Lord to make you his people: He hath made you so "not according to your works, but according to his own purpose and grace which were given you in Christ Jesus before the world began."[c] Ye are "the called of God" to be "witnesses for Him in the Earth," and trophies of his grace in the Heavens. On you as "accepted in the Beloved," the Lord "poureth his benefits" in one rich and everflowing tide of love and mercy.

You, too, *hath he quickened who were dead.* "When thou wast cast out" and "dead in trespasses and sins," "he passed by thee, and looked upon thee, and, behold, thy time was the time of love, and he said unto thee, Live."[d] And "the life ye now live in the flesh,

[a] Deut. vii, 6. [b] John xv, 19. [c] 2 Tim. i, 9.
[d] Ezek. xvi, 5, 6.

ye live by faith on Jesus Christ." It is a new and spiritual existence. A something stirs within you that was never felt before. There is an energy of thought, desire, perception, and enjoyment, that proves vitality. Your will that was once obstinately depraved and averse, totally averse, to *spiritual* good, the Lord hath won, subdued, and made obedient to himself. You cannot now *but* love what God loves and hate what God hates. His service (which forms the *drudgery* of the unregenerate man) is your easy, perfect, and delightful freedom. And those to you are the sweetest moments of your spiritual life when you can most simply and truly say—"*The will of* THE LORD *be done.*"

The Lord, moreover, hath blessed you with *a tender sensibility of conscience.* He hath taken "the stony heart out of you and hath given you a heart of flesh."[e] With your tears for sin, there mingle joys sweeter far to your spiritual taste than were all the pleasures of sin to sense. You know what that meaneth, "Sorrowing, yet alway rejoicing:"[f] and "your rejoicing is this, the testimony of your conscience; that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but, by the grace of God, ye have your conversation in the world."[g] You feel what you say and enjoy what you profess. Once ye *professed* to know God and in works denied him: now you *really* know him, and in your every act acknowledge him. Once with almost unmeaning formality ye occupied your wonted sittings in the House of Prayer—hardly knew wherefore ye were come thither, and expecting, least of all, to meet your God and Saviour there: now the House of Prayer is to your souls a "Bethel"—you feel "the Lord to be in this Place;" and a "Peniel" where the light of God's countenance shines brightly on you. Conscience is become the enlightened eye of your understanding: the smallest mote (a thing which, perhaps, the natural man

[e] Ezek. xxxvi, 26. [f] 2 Cor. vi, 10. [g] 2 Cor. i, 12.

discerneth not) distresses it; and on nothing does it gaze with more intense and rapturous delight than "the glory of God in the face or person of Jesus Christ."

Again: *You hath the Lord united in one loving and beloved brotherhood.* I may truly say as Moses said, "Sirs, ye are brethren,"[h] Anger, and wrath, and clamour, and evil speaking cease, in some measure, among you; and in their stead, the Lord hath given you, "as the elect of God, holy and beloved, to put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering."[i] We "behold how pleasant and joyful a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."[k] You can "love your enemies:" and to every one "that names the name of Christ and departs from iniquity," you can give "the right hand of fellowship." If one member of your body suffers, ye can sympathize with it in its sorrow; if one be honoured, ye can rejoice with it in its prosperity.* How allowedly then may we say, "*Happy are the people that are in* SUCH A CASE; *yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God!*"

But again, *the Lord hath united you under one Head, even his Son, Jesus Christ.* Your Ministers are no more than instruments whereby ye believe: they are not the Lords of your faith.[l] "One is your *Master*, even Christ." He is "Head over all things to the

* These expressions contained no fulsome adulation when spoken, nor is Ministerial commendation (though to be used sparingly and with judgment) always used without beneficial effect. St. Paul commended his converts often—particularly the Thessalonians. (See 2 Epis. i, 3—7.) The truth is—Christian principle will invariably produce Christian conduct. "Faith works by love:" and how necessarily it does so, may be seen in that very admirable Homily of our Church on 'Good Works.' Let the reader notice particularly *the* FIRST *Part on Fasting.* The morals of a people will ever correspond with their "belief of the Truth."

[h] Acts vii, 26. [i] Col. iii, 12. [k] Ps. 133. 1.
[l] 2 Cor. i, 24.

Church"—the "Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End" of your faith and hope and love—the "All" in all your present and everlasting Salvation. "It pleased the Father that *in him* should all fulness dwell." In all respects our Saviour is the Saviour which we need. If we would have in our Saviour a God to save and a man to suffer: in Christ the divine and human natures meet.[l] If we would have "the government" of all things on his shoulder: it is so.[m] If we would that he who saves should judge us, it shall be so.[n] If we would "reign in life"—behold and share the glory of our Lord; the recorded promise is, "Where I am, there shall my servants be."[o] Such is your exalted Head, my People: And how cheeringly sounds the angelic tidings—"Unto you is born *this* day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."[p] Never be it forgotten by you that though, as concerning the flesh, Christ came of the Jewish fathers, yet is he, notwithstanding his human birth, "*over all* God *blessed for ever*."[q] His power, truth, faithfulness, and love, are all engaged to succour and befriend you. Because he lives, you shall live. And while you "rejoice in Christ Jesus," and experience the blessedness of communion with him, sure I am, you will not refuse to 'bring forth the royal diadem and crown him Lord of all.'

With his Son, the Lord hath given you *another Comforter*, one that is to abide with you—not as did your Lord, a period of three and thirty years, but—"for ever;" *for ever* till the ransomed of the Lord return and come to the heavenly Zion, and be, like their Divine and gracious Saviour, crowned with everlasting joy. The Holy Spirit is among you as the testifier and glorifier of Jesus. It is his office to "take of the things that are his and to shew them unto you." He it is who wins your souls to Christ—opens to you the

[l] 1 Tim. iii, 16. [m] Isa. ix, 6. [n] Acts xvii, 31.
[o] John xii, 26. [p] Luke ii, 11. [q] Rom. ix, v.

Scriptures—sheds abroad the love of God in your hearts—strengthens you with all needed might in your inner man—enlightens you in darkness and comforts you in sorrow—guides you when doubtful—prepares you for glory, and leads you on toward "the land of uprightness." Oh! what "great things," what clustering mercies, are these! Feel ye but their value and importance, and the expression '*Take not, Lord, thy Holy Spirit from us,*' will be the prayer not of your *lips* only.

Other and *great* things hath the Lord done for you. *On you he hath bestowed precious means of grace*—means, without which all that he hath done for you might be unknown to you. Ye have means wherewith few are favoured. Ye will bear me witness that I have kept back nothing that was profitable for you; but (according to the ability given to me) have taught you both *publicly* and *from house to house*, testifying to all repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.[r] You have been warned, reproved, besought, consoled, counselled and advised, almost individually: nor has the gracious Bestower of your means left them unblessed to you. O how sweetly sensible have you often been of your Redeemer's presence! how has the Word come to you with power and in much assurance! how have you rejoiced in a felt deliverance from all wrath and condemnation! And even now it is given you once again to circle round the table of your Lord. May you receive the emblems of his 'most precious body and blood" to your 'great and endless comfort!' Go with the shepherds to Bethlehem: gaze on the infant stranger that lies cradled in a manger there; follow him from that manger to the cross, and from the cross to glory; and methinks it will be hard for you to forbear exclaiming,—"What hath God wrought?"—"this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

[r] Acts xx, 21.

"Meditate, then, Beloved, on these things." Yea, think of still greater things than these. There is nothing which a God of infinite power *cannot* do: there is nothing which a God of infinite love *will not* do for his believing and obedient people. Remember "the Everlasting Covenant" God hath made with you, and which is "ordered in all things and sure."[s] Here to you hath he "given exceeding great and precious promises," which are all "yea and amen" to every one that believeth;[t] hereafter will he give you to participate his kingdom and his throne.[v] And the hour approaches when your enemies shall say of you as Israel's enemies said of them, "The Lord hath done great things for them;" and it will be your's to reply as Israel did, "Yea, the Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we rejoice."[w] And remember too, "the gifts and callings of God are without repentance:"[x] free as the air you breathe; firm as the everlasting hills; durable as the throne of God; endless in continuance as eternity.

Such are some few of *the great things the Lord hath done for you.* Let us now inquire

II. *Why you should consider them:*

You should consider them,

(1.) For the humiliation of your souls;
(2.) For the encouragement of your hopes;
And (3.) For the excitement of your thanks.

Consider what great things the Lord hath done for you

(1.) *For the humiliation of your souls.* Perhaps nothing more effectually humbles the soul than a view of God's gracious goodness contrasted with our deep unworthiness. When like Jacob, you have been fa-

[s] 2 Sam. xxiii, 5. [t] 2 Cor. 1, 20. [v] Rev. iii, 21.
[w] Ps. 126. 2, 3. [x] Rom. xi, 29.

voured with rich communications of love and mercy, you will then find Jacob's language expressive of your feelings,—"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant."[y] Or when, like Isaiah, you have seen the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filling the Temple, and heard, as it were, the seraphims crying one to another, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole Earth is full of his glory: then will you most readily acknowledge yourselves to be "a people of unclean lips" and prostrate your souls most humbly before the infinitely holy Lord God.[z] The God that is "glorious in holiness," will be to you "fearful in praises." Whilst he is "doing wonders" for you, you will feel sensibly unworthy of them. Whilst his "mighty hand" upholds and blesses you, you will "humble yourselves under" it. And never are we so secure and happy as when with lowliness and contrition of spirit "we hold us fast by God." The "great things done for you," be it remembered, were, and could, in no wise, be merited by you, "*While we were yet enemies*," were they wrought out for us. Our Church believes and teaches that no 'works' whatever of our's either make men meet to receive or to deserve grace:[a] So effectually would she humble the pride of human nature. When, therefore, you consider the graciousness of God's dealings with you, let the consideration of his mercies humble your souls before him.

But consider them

(2) *For the encouragement of your hopes.* Hath the Lord done so great things for you? Hath he not spared even his own Son?—Then, arguing in the manner of St. Paul, we say, "He that spared not his *own Son*, but delivered HIM up for us all, how shall he not with him ALSO freely give us *all things*."[b] Thus

[y] Gen. xxxii, 10. [z] Isa. vi 1–5. [a] Art. xiii.
[b] Rom. viii, 32.

may you certainly encourage your hopes in the Divine goodness. "All things are your's" in promise; and what the Lord hath promised, a believer may ask. Every already experienced mercy, should be to you a plea for other and more abundant mercies. Look at Abram as he stands before the Lord interceding for the cities of the Plain. (See Gen. viii. 23—33.) Every answer to his prayer emboldens him to ask the more; and it is observable Abram gives over asking before the Lord ceases to bestow. Look at David, too, when he was in the wilderness of Judea: "O God, says he, thou art my God——Because thou *hast been* my help, therefore under the shadow of thy wings *will I* rejoice."[c] And again, see how beautifully the Psalmist encourages his hopes from a consideration of what *had been* done for him—"Thou *hast* delivered my soul from death: *wilt thou not* deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the land of the living?"[d] He *had been*, you observe, delivered from death: he prays *now* to walk before his Deliverer, and to be upheld in the paths of righteousness and truth. "Go ye and do likewise." The Lord bids you "open your mouth wide," and to encourage you so to do, he adds, "and I will fill it."[e] You are coming to "the mercy-seat:" bring with you large petitions: ask what ye will; and doubt not but "he who *hath* delivered, and *doth* deliver, will *yet* deliver you."

And consider what the Lord hath done for you.

3. *For the excitement of your thanks.* What doth the Lord especially require of us in return for all his benefits? Nothing so much as a grateful acceptance of them. "What shall I render unto the Lord, inquires the Psalmist, for all his benefits towards me? I will *take*, he says, the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord."[f] And in the last verse of the

[c] Ps. 63, 7 [d] Ps. 56, 13. [e] Ps. 81, 10
[f] Ps. 116, 12—13.

50th Psalm, the Lord himself says—"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." God is not so "wonderful in counsel, so excellent in working," or so supremely happy amidst the halleluias of the heavenly host, but he bows down a listening and delighted ear to the whisper of thanksgiving upon earth. "Praise is comely for the upright." "A joyful and a pleasant thing it is to be thankful." Thankfulness is the pleasure of piety: and to excite your thankfulness—*consider*. While you muse, the fire will kindle in your heart, and at the last you will speak with your tongue. The things done for you demand perpetual praise. "Ponder" on them like the Virgin Mother of our Lord: Do so till your "mouths praise him with joyful lips." Draw nigh with faith unto the table of Jesus Christ. Feed on him by faith in your heart with thanksgiving. So will "the Father of mercies" "rejoice over you to do you good;" and in your humble, hopeful, thankful, spirits, will he "fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness and the work of faith with power."

I have now inquired What great things the Lord hath done for you, and Why you should consider them. And dividing you into two parties, I say

1. *To those who to-day partake of the Communion,* We hope, Beloved, that you both *have* considered and *will* consider the great things which the Lord hath done for you. To you "he *yet* waits to be gracious." Be, then, all alarm and terror put away from you. "Have faith in God." Come "upon the multitude of his mercies" to his altar. "God is Love," and in love has appointed this holy ordinance for the sustenance and comfort of your souls. Love will excuse infirmity and accept desire. Sinful your heart may be: but God asks you to give it to him: if he asks he will accept it: and accepting it, he will renew and heal and gladden it. And then shall you, with a heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, go your way

"rejoicing for all the wondrous things which ye have seen and heard."

2. *To those who will not to-day partake of the Communion,* I say, We trust that though you turn from us and go away, some of you will yet leave your desires and hearts behind you. We do not advise an inconsiderate coming to the Communion. No; by no means. We would rather much that you should "sit down first and count the cost" of a religious profession. We would have you, however, to consider the great things God *hath* done, *is* doing, and *will* do for his servants. Consider them till you "covet earnestly" to share them. Think how doubtful your Christianity must be while ye call Jesus "*Lord,*" and "*do not the things which he says.*" Think as you homeward go, 'Well, I have left many to do what Jesus Christ commands us in remembrance of him: Can *I* be like them? Where is *my* love to Jesus? Why am *I* not prostrate at his table 'lost in wonder, love, and praise' in the consideration of his mercies? Shall I be welcomed to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in glory, if I continue still to slight and neglect it here?'—Thus think and enquire: and it may possibly lead to discoveries—sad, perhaps, and humbling on your part, but great and merciful on God's part—that will induce you to exclaim on every Christmas-Day which succeeds the present and to exclaim with still new and increasing fervour, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

DISCOURSE XVI.

PARTICIPATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER IMPROVED.

Psalm 116. 12.

What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?

When the Heaven and the Earth were made and all the host of them, God *rested.*[a] The mighty energy of His mighty mind, had produced this material Universe. With feelings of Divine complacency, "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."[b] Thus (in a degree vastly inferior, we must, indeed, allow; but *thus)* it is with ourselves. When our attention, strength, or time, has been occupied about any thing more than usually important, there is a disposition in us to *rest;* and either to enjoy the satisfaction of having accomplished our object or to anticipate the result of our labour. This disposition I believe to be prevalent in many among you at this moment.* You have been doing a great work: You have been making a public avowal of your faith in a

* Preached in the evening of a day on which the Sacrament had been administered; and on which (if the Author mistakes not) 116 of his beloved Flock communicated.

[a] Exod. xx, 11. [b] Gen. i, 31.

crucified Redeemer: Angels and men, yea, the Lord of both, have witnessed your "professed subjection" to Jesus Christ: With more than ordinary solemnity you have taken "the cup of salvation and called upon the Name of the Lord:" Now, then, you pause: You look upward to the world where your Redeemer reigns, and you feel, perhaps, that to depart and to be with Christ, would be "far better" than to sojourn longer here: You look inward on yourselves, and behold, with humble and adoring thankfulness, what great things God hath done for you: Contented, if it be his will to "abide in the flesh" and therein to serve your Lord, you look around you here and enquire how you shall best fulfil your duties; how most surely "pay that ye have vowed;" how most surely, amidst the necessary cares and businesses of life, keep alive the ardour of the fire which grace hath kindled in you; how, in short, "adorn in *all* things the Doctrine of God our Saviour." In this state of calm tranquillity and sober joy, the question—"*What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?*"—naturally presents itself. Accommodating this text to our purpose, let us consider

I. The benefits to be derived from a worthy participation of the Lord's Supper.

And II. The duties immediately connected with our partaking of it.

We are to consider

I. *The* BENEFITS *to be derived from a worthy participation of the Lord's Supper.*

These are great and estimable. We mean not to say they are necessarily derivable from a participation of the Ordinance: The Ordinance is appointed for '*the Faithful*' only; and by 'the Faithful' only are 'the body and blood of Christ verily and indeed taken and received in the Lord's Supper.' To those, then, who *worthily* partake of it, there is derived

(1.) *A stronger faith.* We, in our present state of imperfect being, are creatures of sense. Any thing visible and tangible, therefore, makes a much more powerful impression on our mind than mere abstract truths or spiritual things. Hence, when we *see* the bread broken and the wine poured out, we can more sensibly realize the facts implied—the body and blood of Jesus Christ broken and poured out for sin. Our faith becomes "the evidence of things not seen." And as we exercise it on the work, the life, the death, the love of Jesus, our faith "*grows*," and, in some favoured seasons, "grows *exceedingly*." The Holy Spirit especially blesses meditation on "the *cross* of Christ" to our "furtherance and joy of faith." Like as Abraham after he had offered the ram in sacrifice in the stead of his Son, was "strong in faith, giving glory to God;" so the Christian Worshipper, after a worthy participation of the commemorative Supper of his Lord, "waxes stronger and stronger." He becomes more simply and entirely dependent on "the *dying* of the Lord Jesus." With lessening hesitation he grounds his eternal all on the atonement of the Son of God. He receives evident and sensible pledges of his Saviour's love. His faith becomes to him "a substance"—a felt reality, the worth of which is "*far* more precious than of gold that perisheth." This is one benefit to be derived from a believing participation of the body and blood of our Saviour, Christ.

Another is (2.) *A more full persuasion of the Divine favour.* Some pretend we cannot be persuaded of the Divine favour, and that as to any persuasion of God's love toward us and our acceptance with him, it is all enthusiasm, nonsense, or something worse. But what says St. Paul?—"I am *persuaded* that neither life nor death——shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."[c] And what mean we when we pray for 'such a *sense* of

[c] Rom. viii, 38, 39.

God's mercies,' as will fill our hearts with thankfulness, and dispose us unreservedly to serve and honour Him? When, by the Holy Spirit's quickening and regenerating power, we become sensible of our sinfulness and aware of our desert, we are ready almost to conclude, "There is no hope."[d] We struggle, however, for deliverance: we "*hope* even against hope:" and under the gracious guidance and efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit our trembling hope gradually ripens into sweet persuasion: and when, by faith, we take the holy Sacrament, this persuasion becomes more full and general. We learn to "*joy in God.*" Our conviction of his favour becomes as real and perceptible to our souls, as the kindness of any earthly friend would be to our bodily senses. We "walk in love;" and though all beside should frown upon us, yet the smile of a "reconciled Father in Christ" would make us gladsome and happy.

A further benefit will consequently be (3.) *An increase of love to Jesus Christ and to each other.* We are *naturally* averse to Jesus Christ: no one naturally wills that this man should reign over him: it is, too, the Enemy's one great effort to keep us apart from Christ and ignorant of him. But, when we have found pardon and peace through his blood, how can we but desire and love him? Now, it is in the Communion of his body and blood that Jesus Christ, in a more peculiar and gracious manner, presents himself to our acceptance and our love. Our mind's eye sees him "led away to be crucified:" we follow him in thought to Calvary: we behold him there suspended between the Heavens and the Earth as an outcast from both; his hands and feet and head lacerated and torn with wounds; his body besmeared with blood, and his soul the seat of agony and woe unutterable. "Lovest thou me?" seems the enquiry wherewith this scene is pregnant: "Lord," reply our grateful hearts, "Thou

[d] Jer. ii, 25.

knowest all things; Thou knowest that we love thee." And this love, though it falls, confessedly, far short of what we owe a dying Saviour, will yet, we trust, be 'increased in us ever more and more.' And to *each other*, also, we feel more and more attached as partakers together of that "one bread."[e] The bond of union with our Head and with each other becomes closer and dearer on each participation of the sacred Supper. We "love as brethren" and as "heirs together of the grace of life." We are children of the same Father; lovers of the same Lord; partakers of the same Spirit; and beyond us lies the same eternal rest in glory. A savour of Christian love will mark the character and the converse of every worthy communicant. A radiance of simple unaffected kindness will beam around him, similar somewhat to the glory which beamed in Moses's face after he had been communing with God on Horeb.

Another benefit to be derived from the Lord's Supper is, (4.) *More deadness to the World.* To those who know how duly to value it, this is no small benefit. Alive as we naturally are to all of a temporal kind that concerns us, it is a benefit indeed to have our affections deadened to things below, and our minds drawn up and centred in higher and more enduring good. *This* a participation of the Sacrament is calculated to effect. We, when worthily partaking of it, 'in heart and mind thither ascend whither our Saviour Christ is gone before us:' We "enter, by the blood of Jesus, into the holiest of all; and from a contemplation of "things not seen as yet," we become, in a measure, weaned in affection and desire from things visible and temporal. Mere earthly riches, pursuits, and customs, become tasteless and insipid. They will be valued only so far as our own or others' good and our Redeemer's glory can be promoted by them. We learn what that meaneth, "I am crucified unto the world and the world is

[e] 1 Cor. x, 17.

crucified unto me."[f] We stand like the Virgin Mother gazing on our crucified Redeemer, and his cross effects our crucifixion to all beside himself. It is true, we still have cares, and must fulfil our relative and social duties, but our souls will be on the wing for some holier kindlier clime than this.[g] We shall long to "eat bread with our Lord in his Father's kingdom," and wish rather to know all the "blessedness" to be derived from "the marriage Supper of the Lamb" in heaven.[h] Those of you who are experimentally acquainted with religious truth, will allow that in so saying, "I speak forth the words of truth and soberness;" and that deadness of feeling towards this "present evil world," by whatever means derived, is a truly estimable benefit.

Another benefit, we may observe is, (5.) *Greater courage in the profession of our Faith.* We are, in the earlier stages of our spiritual life particularly, exceedingly timid. I have known many who have wished to reprove a sin, to confess Christ and their attachment to him, and to recommend religion to the love and practice of others; who yet dared not, from fear and timidity so to do. Modesty, humility, and meekness, are commendable in all, and peculiarly amiable in youthful Christians; but these graces of the Spirit must not be confounded with "shame of Christ and of his words." Circumstances often occur which render a courageous profession of our faith absolutely necessary, and wherein reserve would be criminal. Now, a participation of the Lord's Supper is a public avowal of our faith. We therein renew our baptismal engagement to 'fight manfully under the banner of Christ:' our enemies themselves expect us to be true to our Lord, and faithful to our vows: In the recollection of this, we "wax valiant in fight," and become more and more enabled to "give to every man that asketh us, a reason of the hope that is in us." This is a great benefit. It tends

[f] Gal. vi, 14. [g] Isaiah xl, 31. [h] Rev. xix, 9.

considerably to relieve the mind of fearful apprehension, and we lose that dread which a fear of our Redeemer's being ashamed of us must necessarily, where it exists, produce. Thus we learn to be "good soldiers of Jesus Christ;" and, varying the expression a little, we may say—"They that have used this ordinance well purchase to themselves—great boldness in the Faith."[i]

Connected with the foregoing benefit, there will be (6.) *A stronger confidence in duty.* Superiority to both the censure and approval of man is very desirable. It should be with us "a small matter to be judged of *man's* judgment." And yet how common is it even for those whose piety we cannot question, to be afraid of their duty! They love, it may be, the great and useful Societies of our Land; and would, too, most willingly attend their Annual Meetings: but, they dread singularity. They worship God in their families: but, a stranger's presence will interrupt the duty. They love that ministration of the Word which most thoroughly humbles them and most exclusively exalts their Lord: but, man's disfavour is "the lion in the way" and they want resolution to dare it. This sinful diffidence, a believing participation of the Communion, tends to remove. The body and blood of Christ "strengthen" the soul. We become ashamed of our shame. The promise—"In quietness and confidence shall be your strength,"—is fulfilled to us.[k] We "cease from *Man:*" neither his smiles nor frowns greatly move us. We cease from *ourselves:* "having no confidence in the flesh, we rejoice in Christ Jesus."[l] Our duty becomes our pleasure; and now "though an host encamp against us, our heart shall not fear: though war should rise against us, in this will we be confident."[m]

[i] 1 Tim. iii, 13. [k] Isaiah xxx, 15. [l] Phil. iii, 3. [m] Ps. 27. 3.

And with all the benefits already specified, there will be (7.) *A more assured hope of heavenly glory.* In the Communion, we contemplate our Lord not only as "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities," but also as "entered within the vail," and reigning now the triumphant conqueror of all our foes, and the almighty Saviour of our souls. We receive fresh pledges of his love, and renewed assurances of his mercy. Still sweetly sounds the word of promise, "I will receive you to myself: because I live, ye shall live: where I am, ye shall be." Our Saviour tells us he is gone to "prepare a place for us."[m] What will be the peculiar and essential excellence of that Place, we know not. It is enough for us to know that JESUS CHRIST is preparing it. Where reigns "the Prince of the Kings of the Earth," "the Heir of all things," "the only begotten of the Father," must surely be "beautiful for situation," and "the glory of all lands." "With Him for ever" are his followers to be. Whilst here, 'means of grace' are given us to confirm our 'hope of glory.' Some, indeed, dread the mention of *assurance:* but had there been any thing dreadful in it, would the Scriptures have enjoined us to "shew the same diligence to the *full assurance of hope* unto the end?"[n] or should we read as we do in Colossians ii, 2, of *assurance, full* assurance, *riches* of the full assurance, and *all* riches of the full assurance? Certainly not. The more simply, truly, and gratefully, we "discern the Lord's body" in the Ordinance of his appointment, and depend on that Lord himself, the more assured will our hope become. "The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and *assurance for ever.*"[o]

Then—A stronger faith—A more full persuasion of the Divine favour—An increase of love to Jesus Christ and to each other—More deadness to the world—Greater courage in the Profession of our Faith—A stronger confidence in duty—and A more

[m] John xiv, 2. [n] Heb. vi, 11. [o] Isaiah xxxii, 17.

assured hope of heavenly glory, are the special Benefits to be derived from a worthy participation of the Lord's Supper. And if so, with what propriety may the Believer ask, "WHAT shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"

Let us, then, consider

II. *The* DUTIES *immediately connected with our partaking of it.*

We should not shrink from a consideration of our duties: for though "without Christ, we can do nothing;" yet "through his strengthening us, we can do all things." The benefits of our Lord toward us, will make our returns of love and service easy and delightful. An affectionate child will feel it to be his "meat and drink" to do a Father's will. One that loves his Lord, will cheerfully keep his sayings. Disinterested benefits beget returns of kindness.

It is, then, our duty, as immediately connected with our participation of the Lord's Supper.

(1.) *To mortify sin.* It should not satisfy us to fell the *branches* of the corrupt tree; we should be solicitous to lay the axe to its *root*. The very *remains* of sin should be hateful to us and will be hateful to us if we believe our sins to be the thorns, the nails, the spear, which pierced our Lord. We are not forgiven to go and sin again.[p] No; *this* is not what we are to render unto the Lord for his forgiving and redeeming mercy. Sin in its every kind and degree must be mortified. The very "*appearance* of evil" must be avoided.[q] Even in things lawful and allowable, self-denial must sometimes be exercised. This is a means whereby more easily to overcome things unlawful. "All things," said Paul, "are lawful for me; but all things are not expedient;"[r] and even this great and gifted Apostle found it necessary to "keep under his body," lest after all his acquirements, expe-

[p] John v, 14. [q] I Thes. v, 22. [r] 1 Cor. vi, 12.

riences, and enjoyments, "he himself should be a cast away."[s] Let then the most gifted and experienced among you make no truce with sin; but see to it that sin has no dominion over you. Wage with it a ceaseless and perpetual warfare. Mortify and lament your sin of heart, of lip, and life, till you are "presented faultless before the presence of God." Pray ye that the body and blood of your Lord, may indeed make clean your sinful bodies and souls, and that in both, through them, ye may be preserved unto everlasting life—"blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

(2.) *To renounce the world,* is another duty incumbent on us as partakers of the Lord's Supper. I do not believe it possible to be religious, and to love the world. By *the world,* I do not mean the scenery of Nature—that is beautiful and charming; nor do I mean that we should not endeavour honourably to possess, and gratefully to enjoy, if possessed, a worldly competency: but I mean that we should not be the slaves of sense, the dupes of fashion, or the lovers of a world whose god is the devil, and whose votaries are not only "earthly and sensual" in their aims, pursuits, and pleasures, but (as an inspired Apostle would say) "devilish."[t] The followers of One "whose kingdom was not of this world," should affect some better portion. There is little in this world suited to the taste of one who 'verily and indeed' feeds in his heart by faith on Christ Jesus. Let us not, then, by undue compliances, sanction the ways and follies of it. We have professedly renounced them: let us sincerely do so. "Ephraim should say, What have I any more to do with idols?"[v] Shall I celebrate a feast to Jehovah, and forthwith go with the multitude to dance and shout around the altar of an idol-god?[w] Shall the '*How happy I am to see you!*' of the world be in my lips; and the '*I hate your presence*' be the covert sen-

[s] 1 Cor. ix, 27. [t] 2 Cor. iv, 4. James iii, 15.
[v] Hos. xiv, 8. [w] Exod. xxxii, 5, 6.

timent of my heart? Shall I from the fear of "man that is a worm"[x] sacrifice my character, my peace of conscience, yea, more, "crucify my Lord, the Son of God, afresh?" Shall I have ought more to do with these things?—With regard, too, to our worldly circumstances, it is our duty "in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content." God bids us to be "careful for nothing." It is his to provide; and whatever his provision for our temporal wants may be, it should be our's richly and gratefully to enjoy it. Those of us who worthily partake of the Communion of the body and blood of Jesus, have "meat to eat which the world knoweth not of." In the strength of this should we go on from conquering to conquer, cheered and encouraged in all our conflicts with those oft-repeated words—"To him that overcometh"—"To him that overcometh!"[y] Only let us remember *why* our Redeemer suffered,[z] and it will be no painful duty to renounce the world.

(3.) *To walk by faith*, is another duty following immediately from the one just noticed. If we are to renounce *this* world, with all its idle pomp and unmeaning vanity,* we should live and walk by faith in "*another, that is, an heavenly country.*" The King; the righteousness; the glory; the joy; the pure and unmingled pleasure, of that heavenly country, should all be the objects of our believing regard and hope. If by partaking of the holy Supper our faith has been increased, it is that we might exercise it the more. It will increase still by exercise. The established Believer feels and enjoys what younger disciples have no con-

* 'Renunciation of the Devil and all his works, *the pomp and vanity of this wicked world*'—forms the *first* part of our baptismal engagements: who do we find most ready to renounce these things—those who believe themselves to have been regenerated in their baptism, or those who have really been born "not of water only," but "of the Spirit" also?—"WHERE *the Spirit of the Lord is*, THERE *is liberty.*" (2 Cor. iii, 17.)

[x] Job xxv, 6. [y] Rev. ii and iii. [z] Gal. i, 4.

ception of. What one, however, has attained, others may attain. What though "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man, amidst its innumerable conceivings, hath conceived, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him? God, nevertheless, revealeth them to us by his Spirit:"[a] and a spiritual perception of *them* will cast a shade over all sublunary things, and quicken desire after immortality. When the eyes of Elisha's servant were opened, he saw "horses of fire and chariots of fire" round about himself and his master, where before he had seen nothing.[b] And thus is it with us also. When "the eyes of our understanding are enlightened," we see what we never saw before,[c] and by this new and spiritual light, we are to pursue that upward way which leadeth unto a world of life and blessedness. "We walk, says Paul, by faith, and not by sight;"[d] and "the just, says he again, quoting the words of Habakkuk, shall live by faith."[e] The life which Paul himself lived in the flesh, after he became a Christian, was "by faith of Jesus Christ."[f] Can we do better? Forgetting, then, the things that are behind, let us reach forth to the things that are before, nor count ourselves to have attained while there remains any thing to be attained.

(4.) *To watch and pray*, is another plain and obvious duty as consequent on our approach to the Lord's Table. We stand not so habitually on our watch-tower as we should do. It is because we watch not, that we therefore so generally lose the fervour of our religion—the savour of our holy things, and fall so quickly into a cold and listless state of soul. If we would insure a *continuance* of the benefits we derive from the Communion, we must watch and pray. "Men ought alway to pray and not to faint." Satan is jealous of our happiness and watchful to destroy it. It is only by sobriety, vigilance, and prayer, that we

[a] 1 Cor. ii, 9, 10. [b] 2 Kings vi, 17. [c] Eph. i, 18.
[d] 2 Cor. v, 7. [e] Heb. x, 38. [f] Gal. ii, 20.

can detect his subtility and defeat his malice. 'Restraining prayer, we cease to fight:' our hands hang down; our knees wax feeble; and our armour becomes tarnished and useless. Prayer is the divinely appointed means of grace and strength to the soul—"the golden pipe" whereby the "unction from the Holy One" is conveyed to the heart. A *Christian* cannot but pray; but he should be careful to "*pray always with* ALL *prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance*"[g] The more we abound in watchful prayer, the more heavenly-minded and the happier we shall be. Can we sin, can we be angry, can we be tempted with evil, while our hearts are engaged in Communion and fellowship with God? And will it not, if we inquire, be found that we *then* lose the zest of our mercies when we are watchless and prayerless?—Then let us in the ordinance of his appointment, think, on our every renewed participation of it, that we hear our Saviour say, "*What I say unto you, I say unto you all,* WATCH."

(5.) *To glorify Christ,* need I say, is our duty? Surely it becomes—not the duty merely, but—the privilege of a forgiven and redeemed sinner to glorify his Redeemer. But, alas! how prone are we naturally to shun the cross! There is a strange backwardness in us to confess Christ and to avow ourselves his friends. O let us seek to possess the *confidence* of faith and the *assurance* of hope in him! What! after an approach to his Table—after a declaration of our faith in his cross and passion as that ALONE whereby we obtain remission of sin and eternal life—after a surrender of 'ourselves, our souls, and bodies,' to him and to his service, shall we hesitate or refuse to "speak good of his Name?" Can our faith, our persuasion of the Divine goodness, our love to Jesus and each other, our deadness to the world, our hope of glory, be increased

[g] Eph vi, 18.

and strengthened if we willingly endeavour not to glorify our Lord and Saviour? Let us, then, be agreed to honour Christ by the dependence of our heart, the praises of our mouth, and the obedience of our life. Let every benefit done toward us induce the inquiry, *What shall I render unto the Lord?* Let all his benefits together constrain us to resolve with David, "While I live will I praise the Lord: I will sing praises unto my God while I have my being."[h] "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."[i] Make, at least, the *effort* to do so. If the Lord hath done great things for your souls, invite others who fear him to come and hear from you what he hath done for them. Say to them, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together:"[k] and if you feel diffident and afraid to speak of the glorious honour of his Majesty, and of his wondrous works,[l] cry, "*Open thou my lips,*" and you shall soon add, "*And my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.*"[m] After Supper, Jesus and his disciples "sung an hymn:" "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, let us sing and make melody in our hearts to the Lord." So will the Lord be magnified in us, and to us will be fulfilled the promise, "Whoso confesseth me before men, him will I also confess before my Father and his Angels."

We have now considered The benefits to be derived from a worthy participation of the Lord's Supper, and The duties immediately connected with our partaking of it. I will only further SAY

(1.) *To the Communicants among you,*—Meditate on those particular benefits which God has bestowed on you. Do so individually. The text, you observe, says, "What shall *I* render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward *me?*" You will then see what are your peculiar mercies, and be excited "according to

[h] Ps. 146. 2. [i] 1 Cor. vi, 20. [k] Ps. 34. 3.
[l] Ps. 145. 5. [m] Ps. 51. 15.

your several ability" to render unto the Lord adoration, worship, and service. Whether your talents be ten, five, or one, you will "neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." But, however graciously you are or may be blessed, I would say, Still be humble. Benefits, through our natural weakness and depravity, sometimes become snares. Remember Who maketh you to differ, and that there is nothing of good which you have not received. Beware of spiritual pride: it is a subtle sin, and easily creeps into the heart. On the other hand, Envy not one the other's gifts. You should not wish to be like one another; at least, only just so far as you resemble Christ. Your Lord is your Exemplar: *his* steps you are to follow. You may profitably speak one to another of your joys and sorrows; your hopes and fears. You may, too, reprove a brother when reproof is needed; but only "with meekness and in a spirit of love." Pray *with* and *for* each other, you also may; and so keep alive among you the power and vigour of religious principle. Now you have presented yourselves to the Lord, ye may go forth in dependence on his aid, to the fulfilment of every Christian duty—enquiring, as ye go, in the secrecy of believing thought, and the calmness of felt devotion, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" and determined to do a somewhat for Him who has done so much for you.

(2.) *To the non-communicants among you*, I say, What are you rendering to the Lord for all his benefits? It is to no purpose as it respects you that God hath "made a marriage for his Son," and sent his servants to say, "Come, for all things are now ready." You excuse your coming: yea, more, it may be, you contemn the feast, and despise those who partake of it. But, let me ask, Will your farm or your oxen or your intimacies with the world, avail you any thing without the pardoning love and mercy of God? Be assured, repent and believe you *must* if ever you would be

saved. I wish, at your leisure, you would read and consider Luke xiii, and 3, and Mark xvi, and 16. Love the Lord Jesus Christ you *must*, and evidence your love by keeping his sayings you *must*, or you will never "see the felicity of his chosen or rejoice in the gladness of his people." Look at 1 Cor. xvi, 22, and John xiv, 15. We pity our 'enemies, persecutors, and slanderers; and pray our God to turn their hearts.' O that your hearts may be turned, and that ye may render henceforward according to the benefits done toward you!

DISCOURSE XVII.

DEATH TO THE BELIEVER.*

Acts vii, 60.

And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." In the gift of his only begotten Son, God's promise of a Seed that should "bruise the Serpent's head," or in other words, "destroy the works of the Devil," was graciously fulfilled. In the person, the work, the character, the kingdom, of Jesus Christ, we see all the types of the ceremonial Law embodied, all the commandments of the moral Law obeyed and magnified, and all the predictions of the Prophets accomplished. These are, as it were, severally and together, the Star which, appearing in the Heavens of love and mercy, points out to us "a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." Among the manifold purposes of his incarnation, it was, doubtless, *one* to illumine the dark and shadowy vale of death —to direct our anxious inquiry and our earnest hope

* This Discourse was delivered on the Sabbath following the interment of a poor man, who in his 86th year became, as we believed, savingly acquainted with "the truth as it is in Jesus." It is transcribed purposely to bring some events connected with the death alluded to, to the remembrance—the *grateful* remembrance, as the Author trusts, of a few who may favour this Discourse with a perusal.

to an eternal state and an immortality of being beyond the transitory state in which we dwell and the period which terminates our existence here. This purpose was answered mercifully in the martyr Stephen. Stephen was a man "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." He was a devout believer in Jesus Christ, and one ardently zealous for the glory of his Lord. Persons of various countries and professions disputed with him: but, none of them all were able to resist the wisdom and the spirit wherewith he spake. This roused their enmity and provoked their pride. Hence they were induced to suborn men to accuse Stephen of blasphemy. He appeared before the Council to answer the accusation of his enemies, and so full of holy love and spiritual joy was the soul of this Christian champion, that all who sat in the Council, looking stedfastly upon him, beheld his face as it had been the face of an angel. His answer to the charge brought against him we have in Acts vii. It failed to convince, to soften, or to win his calumniators: and, as usual with those who "hate the Light because their deeds are evil," they resolved at once to silence and destroy their victim: "they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And they stoned Stephen calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, recieve my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. *And when he had said this,* adds the sacred Historian, *he fell asleep.*"

We will now inquire

I. What death is to the Believer;
And II. Whence it is he dies so calmly.

In inquiring,
I. *What* death is to the believer,

We observe that it is a *sleep;* a *peaceful* sleep; a sleep *from which he will awake;* and, finally, a sleep *into which, when once awakened, he will fall again no more.*

Death is to the believer a *sleep*. This is the simple and beautiful term by which the inspired writers designate death. The term conveys to us an idea of the placidity and calmness in which a believer dies. Before Christ came, a future state of immortal being was revealed, indeed, and believed; but not so distinctly revealed and so fully believed, as it was after the birth and ministry of our Lord. Abraham saw the day of the Redeemer and looked for an heavenly country; Jacob waited for his Lord's salvation; Job knew that his Redeemer lived and that he should in his flesh see God; David anticipated a re-union with his departed son, and expected to join him in a world of spirits; but it was reserved for Jesus Christ more fully to declare the reality of that heavenly country, the nature and the means of the Lord's salvation, the certainty of the body's resurrection, and the re-union of believers with their Head and with each other in a world of light and glory. A believer's death is now no more than the transition of the soul from a tabernacle of clay to a "house not made with hands." The day of his natural life declines; the shadows of its evening fall around him; wearied and exhausted nature needs repose; its strength is weakness, yea, it may be, labour and sorrow, and in the appointed moment the believer falls "asleep." Nor is it a troublous rest: no; it is a *peaceful* sleep. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is *peace*."[a] The stroke of death—the pain of dying, is, as it were, the kind alarm which leads a child to shelter and repose in the bosom of Paternal love. Since the Redeemer died, death hath been abolished. By descending, too, into the grave, he hath dispelled the grave's dark horrors, and sanctified the resting-place of his dear and believing people. Thus is that saying fulfilled, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."[b] The grave, therefore, is

[a] Ps. 37. 37. [b] Hos. xiii. 14.

now no more than the bed where all that can die of a believer rests in peaceful hope. No cares disturb him; no pains, no fears, no doubts, molest him. Peaceful sleep his ashes, whilst his soul is peacefully at ease where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, and where there shall be no more pain."[c] A fairer, holier, and therefore happier, world than our's receives the believer till all that could die of him has slept its destined sleep and wakes again: For his death, we observe, is but a sleep, and a sleep *from which he shall awake.* "I heard a voice from Heaven, saying,"—and what said the heavenly voice? "Blessed are the dead:" and wherefore *blessed?* Because "they rest from their labours and their works do follow them;" and because, too, "them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" from the chamber of the tomb[d] The night of death will pass away; the morning of the resurrection dawn, and "the dead in Christ shall rise." "The righteous shall have dominion over them (*i. e.* their enemies, and among their enemies, Sin, Satan, Death, and Hell) in the morning."[e] "Lazarus shall rise again" said "the Resurrection and the Life" to the sorrowing Martha: and at his bidding Lazarus arose. In like manner, in what age soever the believer slept in Jesus, he shall "rise again." Nothing shall resist the voice which says "Come forth." "Death and the grave must yield up their dead." "That which was sown in weakness, shall be raised in power; that which was sown a natural, shall be raised a spiritual body." The pains and the diseases of the believer shall be felt no more. He shall come forth from his chamber, rejoicing as the sun, to pursue a sinless, cloudless, glorious, course: There shall be night no more; nor need of the sun or of the moon to lighten him: for the former things are passed away, and the Lord shall be his everlasting light, and his God his glory. Hence we are led to observe that the believer's

[c] Rev. xxi. 4. [d] Rev. xiv. 13. 1 Thess. iv. 14. [e] Ps. 49. 14.

death is a sleep *into which when once awakened, he will fall again no more.* No, no more for ever! "Death hath no more dominion over" *Christ* our Lord: Death shall have no more dominion over *one* that believes and loves and serves him, and is "risen together with him." As surely as "He that was dead is alive again and liveth for evermore," so surely shall the Believer live for ever. In the new heavens and the new earth "there shall be, says the beloved John, no more death."[f] No: the purified and ennobled powers of a redeemed Saint, will be too vigorous ever to need repose. Enfeebled age; worn-out strength; wasting disease; tears of separation; pangs of dissolution; funereal pomp; the slumbers of death; will never be witnessed or experienced in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. No "second death" awaits the Believer. Eternal life is the gift of God in his dear Son; and "whoso liveth and believeth in him shall never die." "The Righteous hath hope in his death:" that hope contains the germ of immortality, and beyond the sigh of expiration that germ shall bloom in rich, luxuriant, and unfailing blessedness.

Such is Death to the Believer. We come now to enquire

II. *Whence* it is he dies so calmly.

And whence is it? Simply because he is *a Believer.* By faith he becomes interested in all the benefits which result from 'the meritorious cross and passion' of Jesus Christ. He believes, as the hearers of Apollos did "through grace,"[g] and by faith he lives upon the treasured and exhaustless fulness of his Lord. While, therefore, viewed in Nature's light, there is a something terrible in Death, yet faith in a crucified and exalted Saviour, spoils Death of its apparent terror, and discovers through its momentary gloom a land of

[f] Rev. xxi. 4. See, too, ch. xxii. 1—5. [g] Acts xviii. 27.

light and life and glory. Hence Paul desired "rather to depart," and was assured that it would be "gain to die." Hence Stephen also with a calmness and composure the most dignified and beautiful, "kneeled down" amid the stones his murderers were showering on him, and after praying for the remission of their sin, he closed his eyes and calmly slept in Jesus. Now like the martyr Stephen, the Believer *partakes of the Holy Ghost; sees Jesus standing on God's right hand; and has a Friend to whose care he may commit his departing spirit.*

And (1.) *He partakes of the Holy Ghost.* Stephen was "*filled* with the Holy Ghost:" *Some* measure of the same Divine and Gracious Spirit does every Believer possess. He it is who makes the Word of truth effectual for the regeneration and conversion of the soul. He it is who shews a man his sinfulness; humbles him on account of it; wins him to Christ; disposes and enables him to glory only in the cross; draws up his mind to high and heavenly things; leads him to see how good is the will of the Lord concerning him, and how surely in keeping God's commandments there is a great reward. Happy, because holy, to the Believer are the ways of Piety. Swiftly obedient is he, because obedience to him is sweet. Attractless and tasteless are the things of sense, because he walks and lives by faith. He feels a stranger here and waits to see "the land that is very far off"—far off and infinitely removed from sin, sorrow, pain, and death; and where his "King reigns in his beauty."[h] Then, what has the Believer to fear from Death? What is there to prevent his falling calmly to sleep? He sees "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;" he sees it, too, in the humiliation of his own soul and in the renovation of his own heart: he "looks up stedfastly into Heaven," and anticipates with humble con-

[h] Isa. xxxiii. 17.

fidence a personal possession of its blessedness. The Spirit which comes to convince the world of sin, to testify of Jesus, and to win and sanctify the soul, will take with him back to the throne of God and of the Lamb every sinner that shall "believe with the heart unto righteousness." If so, then has the Believer cause to reckon Death amongst his treasures,[i] and to look with patient resignation and cheerful hope for "the rest which remains for the people of God."

But (2.) *He sees Jesus standing on God's right hand* —not indeed as the martyr Stephen was favoured to see him, *visibly*, but by *faith*. And whilst the Believer sees the Son of Man thus standing on the right hand of God, he recollects the Saviour's prayer that "where He is those who believe on him may be also."[k] *Him* the Father heareth alway with acceptance and delight; and whatsoever he may ask, the Father will doubtless vouchsafe. In a persuasion of this sweet truth, the Believer may smile in Death, and even desire rather to close his eyes on all terrestrial things. He that was "delivered for our offences and raised for our justification," now "ever liveth to make intercession for us." In dust he lay; from the dust he rose; now he liveth, and is, he says, "alive for evermore." 'If then, may the Believer say, I die with my Lord, I shall also live with him: The Spirit which raised up Jesus my Lord from the dead shall also quicken my mortal body: this mortal shall put on immortality: I shall not die, but live: I have an Advocate with the Father: spiritual blessings in heavenly places await me: a blood-bought crown, a golden harp, victorious palms, and conqueror's robes, are reserved for me beyond the Grave; why, then, should I fear to die? why fear to die even a Martyr's death, since, amid the murderous persecutions of his enemies, the believing Stephen died so calmly?' Oh!

[i] 1 Cor. iii. 22. [k] John xvii. 20. 24.

what an antidote to the fear of Death should be the sure undoubted fact of Jesus being at the right hand of God. "For the suffering of Death, he was, indeed, made a little lower than the angels;" but now do we see him "crowned with glory and honour:" and looking heavenward, the Believer may fearlessly close his eyes on things troublous at best and afflictive, to open them in a world of cloudless glory and unsullied purity. And in life's last conflict, when the sleep of death steals over him, he has

(3.) *A Friend, to whose care he may commit his departing spirit.* Either with David he may say, "*Into thy hands I commend my spirit, for thou hast redeemed it, O Lord, God of truth,*[l]" or with Stephen, "*Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit.*'[m] Unspeakably precious is this privilege. Our earthly friends may, in their love, go with us to the verge of the valley of the shadow of death; but there the dearest ties must be severed, and a last adieu be bidden. One there is, however, that can be with us in the shadowy vale, support and cheer us through it, and while our eyes are closing in death, can give to our souls such brightening views of celestial glory as will enrapture our departing spirits and fill them with desire to wing their upward flight. As amidst the ocean's billows, the shipwrecked mariner clings with increasing earnestness to the floating plank, so amidst the agonies of dying the Believer lays a firmer hold upon the hope of life in Christ. He sees his Lord above him in the world of blessedness: and whilst he hears the gracious words, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not afraid, for I am thy God: When thou passest through the waters, they shall not overflow thee: Thou art mine; I have called thee by thy name: Nothing shall by any means hurt you: Because I live ye shall live, and where I am, ye shall be"—how certainly may he commit the keeping of his soul to Jesus! "*Receive my spirit,*" may he cry;

[l] Ps. 31. 5. [m] Isa. xliii.

and "very gracious will the Lord be to him at the voice of his cry."[m] And when he hath said this, serenely, hopefully, happily, may he fall asleep. "So doth the Lord give his Beloved sleep;"[m] and *hence* it is the Believer dies so calmly.

We have now inquired what Death is to the Believer, and whence it is he dies so calmly.

Permit me, in conclusion, my Brethren, to EXHORT you

1. *To awake from the slumbers of sin:—*

How many, alas! are there "dead in trespasses and sins!" How many with no spiritual life whatever within them! Such, while they continue so, cannot possibly "sleep in Jesus" or "die in the Lord." You must be enlightened with "the light of life," if ye would be peaceful and happy when the curtains of death are drawn around you. As, therefore, Paul said to the careless among the Ephesians, so say I to you—"Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."[n] Do not be saying in your heart, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep."[o] Take care lest your sleep in sin be perpetuated till you sleep in death. Take care lest when "many of them who sleep in the dust of the earth awake," you rise—*not* to shine as the firmament and as the stars for ever and ever, but, to shame and everlasting contempt.[p] You may suppose it time enough yet to enquire into your spiritual state, character, and situation. Because the Bridegroom tarrieth and the Lord delayeth his coming, you may therefore, you conceive, securely "slumber and sleep:" but, O, remember, the "Behold, he cometh!" may be said in a moment of which

[m] Ps. 127. 2. [n] Ch. v. 14. [o] Prov. vi. 10. [p] Dan. xii. 2.

you are not aware; and when ye should be ready to go forth to meet him, what an awful discovery will it be to find you have "no oil in your vessels," and yourselves all-unprepared for the marriage Supper of the Lamb! The unbeliever will know no sweet repose in death. He is represented as being "*driven* away in his death;"[q] and whither is he driven? On the shore of what world will his immortal spirit land? Which will he swell, the halleluias of the blessed or the howlings of the damned? "If he die, shall he *live* again?" Shall even the *hope* of life alleviate the pains of "the second death?" Shall the unregenerate unforgiven soul find rest or repose in hell? No: he may seek death—seek to lose all conscious being, but he shall not find it.[r] I would, then, that ye should "give no sleep to your eyes, or slumber to your eyelids" until you are "alive from the dead," and reconciled to God through the death of his Son. "Awake, O sleeper, and call upon thy God," if so be thou mayest yet live the life, and die the death of a Believer in Jesus.

I exhort you

2. *To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Be not satisfied with the notion that such an one as Jesus Christ exists, or that he is the Saviour of the world, and therefore as a thing of course, your Saviour. His being a Saviour and the Saviour of others, will avail you nothing unless you *know* him to be your Saviour. In the days of health and strength, while imagination places death far from you, you may not deeply feel your need of Jesus Christ: but, however men may live without him, it is dreadful to die without him. With him and by faith in him, even a Martyr, as you have seen, could die in peace: without him, to die peacefully in the true sense of the word, is impossible. There must be a simple affiance in the Lord's atoning blood, an affectionate deference to his

[q] Prov. xiv. 32. [r] Rev. ix. 6.

will, and a believing dependence on his power, ere you can "die the death of the Righteous." We must come to him now if we would go to him hereafter. Believe, then, on the Lord Jesus Christ. If it be hard and contrary to Nature to believe on him, cry, "Lord help thou our unbelief: Lord increase our faith;" and you will soon find that "nothing is too hard for the Lord." Let what has so lately happened among you enforce my exhortation. You have seen both the flower nipped in the bud*—green in the morning, in the evening cut down, dried up, and withered; and you have seen (if we may so say) the sturdier oak that had endured the winds and storms of fourscore years and six, laid prostrate in the dust. What say these things? They say that "man which is born of woman hath but a short time to live:" that though a man may reach to fourscore years, yet is life, at its utmost period, but as "a vapour which appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away." And yet in this little while, how great is the work we have to do! Ask ye, "What shall I do that I may work the works of God?" I answer, "This is the work of God, that ye *believe on him whom he hath sent.*"[a] Then, be doing it. I do assure you that it is a work which even the longest life will not suffice perfectly to do. He to whom we have before alluded told me his lengthened life seemed to be almost nothing when he reviewed it. I lately stood beside his dying bed, and it is from watching the closing slumbers of a dying man, that I come to tell you that NONE BUT CHRIST can make a death-bed happy, that NONE BUT A BELIEVER in Christ can die happily. Christ was the "All" of *his* dependence whose passing bell so lately met your ear. 'Blessed and heavenly,' did he call his Saviour, and with his almost expiring breath did he say, 'There is

* Allusive to an Infant's death which occurred the day after J. L.'s

[a] John vi. 28. 29.

none else can do me good.' "And when he had said this, he fell asleep"—asleep, we hope, in Jesus; and will, we trust, be found, at least "a *little* one" in the Redeemer's everlasting kingdom. Think now of this; and may ye be "*of those who believe to the saving of the soul!*"

I exhort you

3. and finally, *To do now what you purpose doing.* "*Now* is the accepted time:" now is the Lord dispensing mercy and salvation. Delay is the parent of bitter regrets. Bitter were *his* regrets who has just been taken from us. I recollect his calling himself one day, while tears of anguish rolled down his furrowed cheeks, 'A poor, miserable, wretched man for not remembering his Creator and Saviour all his life long.' 'Can God (he added) have mercy upon me? Will Christ receive my soul? Oh! that I had sought and served him from my youth up!'*—Beloved, this powerfully speaks to you all: to you, ye *aged;* to you, ye *young;* to you, ye *friends of the deceased.* If he could speak to you from the eternal world, methinks he would say to one and all of us, "What thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work or device in the Grave whither ye are hastening." And here let me observe—if a few more weeks of health and strength had been added to the earthly life of this poor man, he would probably have approached the Table of his Lord: There now he has never been; and be assured his neglect of the holy Communion was—*any thing but consolatory* to his departing spirit. Hear this, ye that despise, or lightly regard, or willingly neglect, the sacred Mysteries of our Faith. Beware how death comes and finds *you* forgetful of your Lord's command; and if ye desire to remember "the dying of the Lord Jesus," and, as "bought with a price, to glorify Him in your bodies and in your

* '*From my youth up,*' was a favourite expression of J. L's.

spirits which are his"—delay no longer: pray for grace whereby to bring your good desire to good effect—so shall your last end be honourable to your Lord, and blessed to yourselves:

——"A peaceful sleep;
A gentle wafting to immortal rest."

DISCOURSE XVIII.

YOUTHFUL PIETY.

ECCLESIASTES xii, 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

PIETY is amiable and lovely in all, but peculiarly so in young people. It gives an excellence and a worth to character which education of the most varied and costly kind cannot give without it. It is piety, rather than birth or wealth or learning, that gives the most pleasing polish to both the mind and manner of our youth. It is certainly conducive to their highest and noblest interests; for why else should its adoption come recommended to us both by Scriptural precept and example? We may gather, I conceive, from Scripture, that though "His tender mercies are over all his works," yet the Lord's love towards the young is a very gracious and peculiar love. In Isaiah xl and 11 he is compared to a Shepherd who whilst he leadeth his sheep—*leadeth the elders of his people*, carrieth his lambs—*carrieth the little ones of his flock* in his bosom, and foldeth *them* in his arms. When too, "the High and Lofty One" humbled himself, took upon him our nature, and became "the Man Christ Jesus," we find him regarding children with peculiar favour, reproving those who would have kept them from him, and saying, "Suffer *little* children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such

(and like such, in their dependence, humility, meekness, and teachableness) is the kingdom of God."[a] Repeatedly also are youth exhorted to be pious in holy Scripture: and among the many exhortations to youthful piety with which the Bible is stored, our text forms one of a singularly apt and beautiful kind. "*Remember*—remember *now*—remember now *thy Creator*—remember now thy Creator *in the days of thy youth*."

Favour me, then, with your attention while I endeavour

I. To say wherein Youthful Piety consists:
II. To obviate some Objections to it:
III. To state some Reasons for it:
And IV. To recommend it earnestly to the Young among you.

As we discuss these several heads, the subject of Youthful Piety will come fully, and, I trust, profitably under our consideration. I will endeavour

I. *To say wherein* YOUTHFUL PIETY *consists:*

It consists in a ready, filial, and grateful remembrance of God—a remembrance which induces acquiescence in the Divine will and subjection to it. "This is God's commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ,"[b] and "this also is the will of God, even our sanctification."[c] The grace of *faith* which produces the fruit of *holiness*, constitutes real piety. God himself describes the piety of youth in a verse well known to some of you*—"Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the Guide of my youth?"[d] "*My Father!*" cried through the atoning blood of Jesus

* This text had been previously discoursed on, and that with very beneficial effect to the souls of some Young Persons.

[a] Matt. xix, 13, 15. [b] 1 John iii, 23. [c] 1 Thess. iv, 3. [d] Jer. iii, 4.

Christ, and in the Spirit of adoption, is—Youthful Piety.

But it will more easily appear wherein Youthful Piety consists if we instance the family of a truly Christian Parent. As a truly Christian Parent, he will, of course, have the well-being of his children very nearly at heart. In all his conduct towards them; in all his treatment of them; in all he requires of them, he will design only their improvement and happiness. His children may not always be told the *reasons* of the Father's conduct towards them, or be satisfied as to its wisdom and propriety: but this, if they be meek, yielding and submissive, will not much concern them, nor will it be otherwise than pleasant and delightful to honour and obey a Father whom they love. Now, their Father may know them to be in a world of sin and danger: Calling to him one of his youthful charge, we may suppose him to say, 'My child, you live in a wicked ensnaring world; its people are generally vain and foolish; its ways are frivolous and absurd; its friendships are hypocritical and delusive; its god is the Devil; him and all his works you have promised to renounce; I must require you, therefore, not to affect the world, not to court its society, or to desire its pleasures.' What duteous child would question the Father's judgment or refuse to acquiesce in the Father's will?

The Father too may see the youthful mind of a child set with intense delight upon some mere trifle. He watches for a favourable moment, and says, 'Come here, my child; you seem greatly pleased with that trifle: now listen to me; go and throw that thing into the fire, and I will give you something really valuable.' The countenance of the child is clouded. It has yet nothing in the stead of what it so much loves and and longs to retain. The Parent, however, must be obeyed: He is known to be too kind to require any thing for his children's hurt: With, perhaps, a sorrowing heart and a tearful eye, the trifle is thrown

away; the Father's promise is believed and his command obeyed: When it pleases him, he fulfills his word; the child becomes fully satisfied with his goodness, and enjoys with mingled feelings of surprise and pleasure, the richer good it has acquired.

A child may, moreover, be sick, and, to human view, declining for death. A tender Parent is all-anxious to ease and save him: He prepares a medicine: it may be bitter and nauseous to the taste: there may be, at first, unwillingness on the part of the child to take it. 'My child, may we suppose the Father to say, you are very ill; you must die without relief: I have procured a medicine which, if you will take it, may do you good: Do, I intreat you, take it.' Possibly with hesitation and reluctance, it is taken; it avails for good; pain is alleviated; ease is afforded; health is restored, and the life is saved. What now will be the feelings of such a child towards its Parent? Will the Father's love be forgotten? Surely not; but rather a deeper and a more grateful remembrance of the Father and the Father's love will be felt within the bosom of the child. Or should, unhappily, the child be forgetful of its Parent and his kindness—abuse authority, or act contrary to known commandments, the Father's "loving correction" shall humble it, bring its fault to remembrance, and induce a purer and more earnest desire to "walk in all pleasing" than was ever felt before.

Now, let the Father we have supposed be "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and the child we have supposed be the child of God's gracious adoption, and the conduct we have described will be—Youthful Piety.

The Lord Almighty says to his every son and daughter "Come out from among the wicked and be separated from them: touch not the unclean thing: love not the world, neither the things of the world: have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them: follow not the multi-

tude to do evil: a companion of fools shall be destroyed: the wicked shall be turned into hell: the Sodom of iniquity shall be burned up: Come, therefore, out of her my Children: I will receive you, and be a Father to you." This is the heavenly Parent's call to his dear family: 'they through grace obey the calling,' and so become "a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

God sees, too, that his children's affections too easily centre in "things below:" He bids them, therefore, to deny themselves, to forsake, in willingness to do so, even all that they have, and to follow Him.[c] He promises, however, to repay his children a hundred-fold whatever they may give up or deny themselves for his sake.[d] They believe their Father wishes them to give up or to deny themselves nothing which would be profitable for them to keep or to enjoy. They love his will: they believe his promise: though, therefore, any thing of a worldly, pleasurable, or sinful, kind, be dear to them as "a right hand," they away with it. And what in its stead do they find? When God fulfils "the good pleasure of his goodness" towards them, his children find themselves possessed of more "durable riches" and sublimer joys than any, the utmost possible, indulgence of the senses could afford.

Again, the Eternal Father finds mankind in a state of abject wretchedness and ruin—no health in us and our souls "sick unto death." He comes, and with the bowels of a most beseeching tenderness yearning towards us, he says, "Why will ye die?"[e] 'My wisdom hath devised a salvation for you, that at once expiates your guilt and satisfies my justice: I have found a Ransom: See your Atonement in the blood-shedding of my Son: Honour him with the assurance of your hope and the confidence of your faith: Glory only in your Lord, and you shall prove my power to save you to the uttermost.' At first, it may be, with

[c] Luke xiv, 33. [d] Mark x, 29, 30. [e] Ezek. xxxiii, 11

trembling hesitation the word of this salvation is received; subsequently it is embraced with more cordial and grateful readiness, and presently the before sickening dying soul becomes renovated, exalted, purified, in all her powers and faculties. The rebel becomes a child; and will the child forget the grace that makes him such? Will there be no remembrance of the Father of all his mercies?—No delight in his presence?—No love to his Word—his day—his ways and people? Assuredly there will: for what child that loves his Father, will not love his Father's presence, society, converse, every thing? Should a child of God, however, be "overtaken in a fault," and thereby "grieve the Holy Spirit of God," the chastisement of love shall humble him; and when humbled, the Lord will restore comforts to him, and by the grace of God he shall rise again, amend his life, and walk more circumspectly than he walked before.

This, then, Beloved, we call Youthful Piety: It consists, you see, in a humble, affectionate, and obedient remembrance of our Creator. And can there possibly exist *objections* to it? Why, it would be heaven on earth if all mankind were pious—if all men, every where, remembered now their Creator. Objections, however, to a thing cannot make that thing unworthy our attention and regard: nay, rather, they sometimes, when examined, tend to prove the value of it. Having, therefore, shewn wherein Youthful Piety consists, I proceed

II. *To obviate some* OBJECTIONS *to it:*

(1.) *It is time enough yet,* say some, *for our Youth to be pious.* This objection goes on the supposition that our Youth have yet many days and years to come: but how know we what a day or even an hour may bring forth? Yesterday is passed and cannot be recalled: to-morrow we cannot insure: the present moment only is our's, and this, if lost, will be lost for ever. Delay, therefore, is hazardous in the extreme.

It is "with fear and trembling" we are enjoined to "work out our salvation:" how dreadful, then, must be indifference and unconcern about it! Besides, who but our GOD, our Maker, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, should have the prime and vigour of our lives? Shall we give the best and earliest of our days to ourselves, to our temporal interests or worldly pleasures, and the mere dregs of our earthly being, with their commonly attendant weakness, weariness, and worthlessness, to our Creator? Will ye call this an acceptable offering to the Lord? Is not this, rather, to offer the lame and the blind and the halt upon his altar? The youngest of us all is not too young to die; can he then be too young to remember now his Creator? "I love them, says the Wisdom of God, who love me; and they that seek me *early* shall find me."

(2.) *Youth is the time of enjoyment,* say others: *Young People should enjoy themselves.* True: and is there nothing to enjoy in the favour and friendship of our Creator?—Nothing to enjoy in freedom from the guilt and power of sin?—Nothing to enjoy in a conscious redemption from a hell of everlasting woe, and a hope full of immortal blessedness?—Nothing to enjoy in being good and doing good? And is there any time comparable to youth for the enjoyment of these things? Besides, what, instead of those things, are the things which usually young people are allowed to enjoy? Why, they may give the reins to passion, seek pleasure wherever they can find it, spend their days and nights in dissipation, not concern themselves about religion and religious duties, but forget their Creator, contemn his authority, and cast his law behind them: and all this we are to be told is enjoyment, and 'best befitting the days of early life.' How surely does "*the natural man discern* NOT *the things of the Spirit!*" What, I ask, is there in the things of sense to satisfy the desires of an immortal soul? Will aught in them gratify the soul in its hereafter recollections? Can aught but piety afford either youth or age any *real*

satisfaction and *enduring* pleasure? No: without this, "vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, ALL is vanity."

(3.) *Religion is very well and suitable for old age and infirmity*, is an objection to Youthful Piety nearly allied to the foregoing. So it is: but is it, therefore, unsuited to health and youth? The young are alike liable to disease and sickness with the aged. Take away religion, and what would you substitute for it? Can any thing but religion sooth a distressed and wearied mind, cheer the gloom of a sick or dying chamber, and smooth the descent to the vale of death? The experience of ages is accumulated in proof of the power of religion to cheer and sustain the mind amidst the pains, the weaknesses, and distresses of mortality. Philosophers may laugh and infidels may scoff at Piety and its sacred influence; but their laughter and their scorn evidence them to be fools and madmen.[f] It will be found that nothing but the fear and love of God will carry us honourably and safely through the scenes of active life, save us from the sins and dangers which surround us, and make our old age cheerful and respectable.

(4.) *We can repent and be religious some future time*, will young people themselves sometimes say, when exhorted to remember *now* their Creator. But to repent when we will is not in our power. Repentance is the gift of Jesus Christ,[g] and he may withhold to-morrow what we refuse to ask to-day. "Now" are you, ye young, required to remember your Creator. He does not say, Forget me ten, twenty, or thirty years, and then remember me. No, he asks your remembrance of him *now*. His spirit will not always strive with man.[h] Your meaning to be religious, admits the propriety of your being so: your not being so is sinful: for "to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." "Repent, therefore,

[f] Ps. 75. 4. [g] Acts v, 31. [h] Gen. vi, 3.

and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

(5.) *Piety is a melancholy thing,* it is often further urged. But how is it, let me ask, people so very generally resort to religion in sickness and at the approach of death? Would they do so if there were nothing but melancholy and gloom in religion? Did this fact never strike you? Does it not argue that there must be a something in piety not to be found in any thing beside? And can we suppose *that something* an occasion of sadness and distress? Besides, who are they that say it is? Not the *pious*, but such as never felt the power of godliness and the joy of faith. Are they, then, to be believed who tell us of what they cannot possibly be judges? Listen rather to the children of God, and they will tell you from sweet experience that "Wisdom is the principal thing," and that "*her* ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." There was "*great* joy" in Samaria as soon as the Gospel of Jesus Christ was heard, received, believed, and loved, there.[h] Some measure of the same joy will ever invariably accompany a sincere "belief of the Truth." Was the society or the converse of a kind and benevolent parent ever known to make a child unhappy? *If* piety in its present imperfect exercises tends to make us melancholy, how shall we endure its purer and sublimer exercises in a future world, and *that* uninterruptedly for ever? *If* the remembrance of our Creator saddens and dejects our spirits here, O how abjectly wretched will they be before the throne of God and of the Lamb!

(6.) *Piety induces low and vulgar habits,* it has, too, been said: *it spoils gentility and makes the poor familiar.* This objection betrays in those who advance it, great ignorance of Scripture and of Scriptural piety. No: the Gospel which we preach inculcates the purest

[h] Acts viii, 8.

morality, tempers the most gracious, demeanour the most affable, behaviour and manners the most courteous. Piety gives to gentility its finest polish, and to poverty its noblest ornament. In the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, lowliness of mind is true nobility, and simplicity of deportment true politeness. If the eternal Father condescends to adopt into his family a child, poor and illiterate soever as he may be, does it become us to slight and contemn him on account of his poverty and ignorance? Ought we not rather to acknowledge in such an one—a brother? One that shares with us the riches of the same unmerited favour, and that shall inherit, equally with the greatest born, the most affluent and learned, the same kingdom and throne and crown of glory? However high or wise our Youth may be, a remembrance of their Creator will prove to them the richest heritage and the truest wisdom. "*The fear of the Lord,* THAT *is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*"

But (7.) *It will incur reproach, and possibly injure reputation; and it may also retard advancement in life to be pious too soon,* is the final objection to Youthful Piety we shall choose to notice. O how human nature must be fallen, for a remembrance of our Creator—a deference to the will and love to the commandments of our heavenly Father, to incur reproach! How sordid must be the views of a parent who seeks FIRST for his children *any* object below "the kingdom of God and his righteousness!" And how must "the honour which cometh of man" be desired and valued above "the honour which cometh of God only" where there exists the fear of disrepute on account of piety! But, be it so: the carnal mind hates the truth, and affects to despise those who love it: but, is man to be feared rather than God?[1] If any who love the Lord are subjected to peculiarity, whose fault is it? Is it not their's who "forget God" and make self and the aggrandize-

[1] Matt. x, 28.

ment of self their one great and exclusive aim? If we differ in taste, sentiment, feeling, desire, and hope, from the worldling, the "would-be rich," and the sensualist, it should be to us matter of devout thanksgiving, and one pleasing proof to our minds that we are "born of God," and really his children. "If," says the once despised Jesus, and poor Immanuel, "ye were of the world, the world would love you: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."[k] Let it hate you, thou Youthful Christian: it hated your Lord before it hated you: and if you suffer with him—whether in the word or by the conduct of the world, you shall also reign with him, and acquire that honour and advancement which the words—"Come ye blessed children of my Father," so abundantly imply.

Having now endeavoured to obviate some objections to Youthful Piety, I come

III. *To state some* REASONS *for it:*

There are many and powerful Reasons for Piety in early life: Mark the following:

(1.) *It is reasonable in itself.* When the Holy Spirit by the Apostle Paul, beseeches us by the mercies of God to present ourselves, as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to him, he calls our so doing a "*reasonable* service."[l] And surely it can be none other than reasonable that a *creature* should remember his Creator; a *redeemed* creature his Redeemer; and an *immortal* creature that immortality which awaits him. We execrate ingratitude one towards another: is there nothing execrable in an ungrateful forgetfulness of our Maker? Soon, then, as reason dawns, should it be exercised in acquiring the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. If Piety be ever a reasonable thing, it cannot be unreasonable in Youth.

[k] John xv, 19. [l] Rom. xii, 1.

(2.) *God requires it.* It is GOD who says, "Remember now thy Creator in the *days of thy Youth.*" "My son, says he again, give Me thy heart:" Let me be throned in your affections and desires: "I will not give my glory to another: Thou shalt have no other gods but me: It is good for a man to bear the yoke *in his youth;* take, therefore, my yoke upon you." Now, "will a man rob God?" Yet, "*ye* have robbed me," may God justly say to those of our Youth who forget him and refuse him the homage of their heart. They rob him of the best, because the earliest, of their time and strength. God requires our remembrance of him for our good. "Great peace," says the holy Psalmist, "have they that keep thy law; and nothing shall offend them."[m] When, therefore, the Father of our spirits says, "*Remember* ME," he says in effect, "Be peaceful and be happy." In this way, then, O young man, mayest thou "rejoice, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy Youth."

(3.) *The mind when young is more susceptible of impression.* There is in youth a susceptibility of mind, very rarely to be found in grown or elderly people. Well known it is to those who are at all conversant with aged persons, how hard, in general, it is to make them understand things. Whereas, the truths of Revelation plainly and affectionately stated, will often produce impressions of a most pleasing kind in earlier life and on the more youthful mind. A character will thus be formed of sterling and substantial worth. Where a filial fear of God becomes the grand and ruling principle of action, the reply of the young man Joseph will be present in the hour of temptation and trial—"How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"[n] Nature, indeed, and sense, will still be opposed to truth and holiness: but the corruption of Nature will yield to the prevalence of grace; and

[m] Ps. 119. 165. [n] Gen. xxxix. 9.

the "babe" will eventually attain to "manhood," and become "a father in Christ."

(4.) *Piety in Youth gives a proper bias to the affections.* We are no advocates for the Religion from which the affections are excluded. Jesus Christ most certainly meant them to be exercised in the Religion of his followers: why else does he require us to "set our *affections* on things above?" and why else does St. Peter speak of love to an unseen Saviour, and joy in him, through faith, unspeakable and full of glory?[o] Now, we all know how prone we are to set our affections on things below, and where they have been long centred in "things seen and temporal," how hard do we find it to fix them on "things not seen and eternal!" With youth, therefore, it must be less difficult to cultivate a religious taste, and to maintain a heavenly conversation. "The desire of our soul is to thy Name and to the remembrance of thee," says Isaiah.[p] Happy is it where the bias of the affections and desires is thus "God-ward." It does more to refine and exalt both mind and manner than birth, or wealth, or rank, or mere human teaching ever did or can do. And sure we are when the affections are fixed on God in Christ, nothing will be loved or desired but what is really good: and were all things wanting save *one*, that one would lead even a little child to say—"*The* LORD *is my portion; I shall not want:*" 'I love my God and am loved of him: and in him I find my rest, my heaven, my all.'

(5.) *The world will be viewed in a true light.* The real character of the world's ensnaring and deceptive vanities cannot be seen but by the light of Truth. Where the Truth is believed and felt, there will cease to be a relish for mere worldly pursuits and pleasures. They will sicken and disgust a soul affectionately mindful of its Creator, and truly alive to the joys of Religion. This to those who "remember God in his

[o] 1 Epis. i, 8. [p] Ch. xxvi, 8.

ways," will be no hard saying. Now, the world is, allowedly, a great enemy to young persons. They are not yet acquainted with it. There is in its riches, friendships, and honours, a seeming good—a something to be desired to make one happy: but, only let our Creator be remembered, only let the realities of an *eternal* world be perceived, only let "the joy and peace of believing" be experienced, and the good which *this* world could give us becomes trivial and unimportant. True; by many a one this would be thought a calamity did it happen to their child or children, but they would think so only because they themselves were the servants of Mammon, and "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." To what must we ascribe that zest for carnal joy—that fondness for dress—that aspiring to be something when we are nothing—that ambition to ape superiors—that shame of poverty and poor relations—that discontent with the station of life wherein a just and gracious God hath placed us, but to *a want of Piety?* Can we, then, be pious too soon? Can we too soon renounce the world in our desire and heart? Can we too soon be mindful of our Creator?

(6.) *Piety in youth lays a foundation for placidity and calmness in age.* The lapse of years deepens and matures religious principle. The youthful Christian grows in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour. Faith increases; hope strengthens; love abounds. Does he pray, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works: Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not:"[q] The answer of God says to him, "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you."[r] What gracious promises are these! how rich! how precious! Amidst the infirmities of age; in the absence of many that were the companions of Youth,

[q] Ps. 71. 17, 18. [r] Isaiah xlvi. 4.

and the friends of maturer life, "I am he" saith the Lord; your unchanging and ever faithful God: "I will carry you; I will bear you; I will deliver you." Who to insure this "fatherly goodness" in age, would not remember now his Creator in the days of his Youth? Look at a *good* old man; how venerable and interesting is the object! The silvered brow; the softened manner; the upraised eye; the cheered and illuminated countenance; the resigned soul, and the earnest hope, all bespeak him ripe for immortality. "All the days of my appointed time, says he, will I wait, till my change come:"[s] and when his change is come how truly may he add, "I have waited for thy salvation O Lord!"[t] "*Other* foundation save Jesus Christ" can no man, indeed, lay; but to have built on him "the gold, the silver, and the precious stones" of a holy, religious, and useful life, will secure in life's declining days, and beyond the period of our earthly being a free and rich reward.[v]

(7.) *Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour will be more abundantly honoured by the devotion of our Youth to his service.* It is a poor return for all his mercies towards us, and all his sorrows on our account, to give the Lord the last moments of a useless life. Did he create us, and when fallen redeem us, and are we under no obligation to remember him? Should not our children still cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David?" Is it possible to love a Redeemer too ardently, or to serve him too gratefully? Alas! how sadly in general, is he forgotten! how heartlessly worshipped! how scarcely loved! Whereas, let but our Youth remember, worship, love, and serve him, and how much would be done for the good of his chosen, the furtherance of his kingdom, and the glory of his name! There is a vigour of thought, a warmth of feeling, a flow of benevolence, in early life, which when devoted to the service of the Lord, makes that service energetic and

[s] Job xiv, 14. [t] Gen. xlix, 18. [v] 1 Cor. iii, 11, 14.

delightful. Kindly disposed is the Lord Jesus Christ towards "little children;" and though in glory now, he does not despise the feeblest effort to please and honour him. Josiah in the eighth year of his age, "thought upon the Lord:" Timothy "from a child" had known the Holy Scriptures: and for others' encouragement to remember him, the Lord hath said by Samuel,—"Them that honour me, I will honour: whilst those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed."[w]

Then because Youthful Piety is reasonable in itself;—because it is required by God; because the mind when young is more susceptible of impression;—because piety in youth gives a proper bias to the affections;—because the world will be viewed in a true light;—because piety lays in youth a foundation for placidity and calmness in age; and because, finally, the Saviour will be more abundantly honoured by the devotion of our youth to his service, should Youthful Piety be cherished and cultivated in life's very earliest days.

And having stated these Reasons for it, permit me now

IV. and lastly, *To recommend it earnestly to the Young among you.*

To every individual Young Person amongst you, I would say, "Remember now *thy* Creator, in the days of *thy* youth." Be it your solemn and determined purpose to do so. If, unhappily, you have suffered childhood and youth to pass away in forgetfulness of God, O! forget him now no longer. Remember him in your maturer years, and let not age come on you, and find you still forgetful of him. You are exhorted to remember your Creator in the days of your early life "*while the evil days come not and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*" Days

[w] 1 Sam. ii, 30.

of evil may await you; days of weariness and painfulness; days of sorrow and distress; and ere your life in the body closes, years may be added to it in which nothing of a worldly kind can be enjoyed: How well then would it be for you to have a Friend, a Saviour, a Comforter, in God! How sweet to feel the eternal Spirit's consolations! How cheering amid the gloom of these days or years of evil to be assured that "the Sun of Righteousness" was risen, and that though hidden now behind some passing clouds, he would appear anew with healing in his beams! Then, remember *now* your Creator. Cherish a filial fear of your great Father. Remember and forget him not. True; you may both hear and adduce objections to your so doing: but, what are they? Will they bear the test of Scripture? Can they invalidate your obligations to remember your Creator? Do they even satisfy yourselves? Does there not a something whisper that you ought to remember God? Is there not a latent purpose within you sooner or later to do so?—Then, why not "now?" You have before you several Reasons stated for piety in youth: Have these no weight with you? Let, them, I pray you, dwell upon your mind. Consider to whom you are indebted for your being: Who brought you through your infant dangers: Who now asks your remembrance of him, and why he says, *Remember Me.* Add to the rich mercies of your creation and preservation, the richer mercies of redemption. Was your Creator and Preserver obligated to become your Redeemer? Could he not "by *any* means clear the guilty," other than by himself becoming "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," living a life of privation and poverty, and dying an accursed death? and shall your hearts remain forgetful of him and unmoved towards him? Shall your youthful ardour not kindle into the fire of love in the service of a Saviour-God? Will you refuse to remember him in his ways? What though elder persons, and possibly your parents

themselves, may seem to have forgotten their Creator in the days of their youth, and to be forgetful of him still; they are no example for you. God says, Do not *ye* forget me: let me be remembered in *your* youth. And what though your parents or others should discourage or disallow religion in you, and to do so, should urge one or all of the objections to Youthful Piety we have just noticed, you are to obey God rather than man: even a parent's command is not to be obeyed when it comes in competition with the word and will of God.* It is because so many of our elders are evidently unmindful of God, that therefore you, ye young, should especially remember him. Let me observe, too, the piety of a child has not unfrequently been a means of spiritual and eternal good to a parent or an elder member of a family. In one instance I have known, the parents would most willingly have crushed the very beginning of piety in a child: but that child has been privileged to see a wondrous change in both his parents, and been gladdened to hear the acknowledgement—'There is no time like *youth* to serve the Lord.' "Whoso is wise and will consider these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."[x] It is not true that piety spoils the native cheerfulness and buoyancy of the youthful mind. The sorrows of penitence may indeed becloud the brow and solemnize the manner for a season, but when brought

* In repeated instances has the Author known a child's becoming pious deemed by the parents almost the greatest possible calamity that could happen to their offspring. Pitiable blindness! Many a young person gets whirled about to watering-places, is forced into company, &c. &c. to cure religious melancholy. How absurdly ridiculous! Quietness and the Bible better befit such. It is not religion, but the want of it, that makes any one unhappy. As helps to young inquirers, the Author has found 'Buck's Guide to the Young Christian,' and 'The Refuge,' by the Author of 'A Guide to Domestic Happiness,' very useful. See also 'A Guide for True Pilgrims,' by S. Beaufoy.

[x] Ps. 107. 43.

to Jesus, though there may be the weakness and helplessness of him of whom we read in Matt. ix, 2, yet will the words, "Son be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee," "put joy and gladness into his heart," and he will "go on his way rejoicing"—not perhaps as once he did, in the vain and empty frivolities of the world, but—in the pardoning mercy and redeeming love of his Creator. And can any joy be compared unto this joy? Is not this 'that sun-shine of the breast' without which a gloomy desolation reigns through all our powers? Study then to make it your own by a grateful remembrance of your Creator now in the days of your youth. And should any through pride, or ignorance, or prejudice, or all together, oppose, vilify, mock, and condemn your remembrance of him, do not "strive" with them, but "be gentle unto all men; apt to teach" as and when opportunity shall be afforded; "in meekness instructing those that oppose" both their own and your soul's best interests; "if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."[y] It is "with meekness and fear" we must "be ready to give to every one that asketh us, a reason of the hope that is in us."[z] Youth should oftener wait to be asked "a reason" than to force one. Firmness of principle should be tempered with modesty and reservedness of speech.— Another ground also there is whereon I would earnestly recommend early piety. A time there is with all when "man goeth to his long home and the mourners go about the streets"—when "the silver cord of life is loosened"—when the dust returns to dust again, and the spirit to Him who gave it:" In that time would you not that God should remember *you?*—"remember you with the favour he beareth towards his people?" Assuredly you would: but can you expect him to do so while you are forgetful of him? Think how agonized and tormented will be

[y] 2 Tim. ii. 25. [z] 1 Pet. iii. 15.

the minds of such as come to the door of Mercy, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us," and to whom the Lord will answer, "Depart from me, I know you not!" Then, knock betimes. Fulfil your baptismal vows: "pay that ye have vowed." Give your young hearts up to God. Use with earnest diligence the Means of grace wherewith he so kindly favours you. Ask ye what these Means are? I answer, Meditation;[a] Prayer;[b] Reading the Word of your Creator;[c] Attending his public Ordinances;[d] and spiritual Conversation with any older and more experienced than yourselves.[e] "This do and ye shall live"—live, by "the supply of the Spirit of Christ," a life of joy and usefulness and peace in this world, and in the world to come a life of near and everlasting communion with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. If there be in any of you a wish to be godly, and yet a principle of opposition struggling against it, O cry unto the Lord for help: "mighty to save" does he reveal himself to you; and while he bids you to remember him, he will give you increasing grace to do so. "Ask and ye shall have." Listen not a moment to the reasonings of the carnal mind, the insinuations of the Enemy, or the ill-timed and mis-judging advices of wordly and ungodly people. Resolve with Joshua that, come what will, you "*will* serve the Lord." "Only be strong and of a good courage:" only *decide* Whom you will serve and Who shall have the earliest and the warmest affections of your heart, and you will presently feel triumphantly superior to every thing that would oppose your Youthful Piety. Reproach for Christ's sake would not move you. Love to your Lord would bear, hope, believe, and endure, all things. You would feel as those felt who once departed from the presence of an iniquitous council "rejoicing that they were

[a] Gen. xxiv, 63. Ps. 39. 3. [b] Ps. 40. 1, 3. Ezek. xxxvi, 37.
[c] Jer. xxiii, 29. John v, 39. Heb. iv, 12.
[d] Acts x, 33, 34. Heb. x, 25. [e] Mal. iii, 16, 18.

counted worthy to suffer for a Saviour's sake,[f] and then will your experience confirm the saying "BLESSED *is the man that feareth the Lord, and that delighteth greatly in his commandments*;"[g] nor will you to all eternity regret remembering your Creator now in the days of your youth.*

* This Discourse, when delivered, closed with a reference to the then recent decease of S. M. The Author was wont to write less of the Application than any other part of his Discourse:—(not that he deems the Application of *less* importance than any other part of a Discourse, for his judgment is quite the reverse)—the closing remarks, therefore, of this and some other Discourses in this volume, are either altogether omitted or very succintly stated.—He would just observe that whilst S. M. was a visitant in his Parish, it pleased God, under a discourse from, "*Young Men likewise exhort to be sober-minded*," powerfully to impress and awaken her soul. From being gay and worldly, she became serious and godly. Mason's "Believer's Pocket Companion" tended considerably to improve and enlarge her views of Christian Truth. That Truth was beautifully adorned in S. M.'s whole deportment during a very long and painful illness, and more particularly so in her resigned and peaceful death. Her almost expiring words were—'O that the young would remember their Creator in the days of their youth!' May *those* to whom her memory is dear experience the blessedness of so doing!

[f] Acts v, 41. [g] Ps. 112. 1.

DISCOURSE XIX.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

1 Thessalonians v, 11.

Wherefore, comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

'The Communion of Saints' forms one of the articles of our faith. We profess therein as firm a belief as we do in the existence of God the Father Almighty; the mission, work, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; or the personality and influence of the Holy Spirit. But, the *profession* of a truth and the *experience* of it, are widely different things. It would be well if all who *say* they believe in the Communion of Saints, *felt* what they said. It is much to be feared that when many are repeating the Apostle's Creed, God sees a lie upon their lips—sees that they neither know nor care to know the import of the words they utter. Justly may he say with reference to such as he said with reference to Israel, "I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken: they have *well said* all that they have spoken: O that there were such an *heart* in them!"[a] Of you, Beloved, we hope better things, and trust that "with your hands" and voice, you "lift up your *heart* to God in the heavens."[b] To you then we would say in the lan-

[a] Deut. v, 28, 29. [b] Lam. iii, 41.

guage of Paul to the Thessalonian converts, "Wherefore, comfort yourselves together and edify one another, even as also ye do." In making a few remarks from these words, we shall do so under the two following heads :—

I. The Communion of Saints:
II. The Advantages of it.

And I. *The Communion of Saints.*

Ere we notice their *Communion,* it will be well to say whom we mean by *Saints.* By Saints, then, we mean those who have been convinced of sin; shewn their lost and ruined state; drawn to Jesus Christ; and are now living under the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost. These are the Saints. Or, if you would know who the saints are,—*mark this*—they are they whom the servants of Mammon and the lovers of pleasure usually call so in *derision.* If you see any truly desirous of salvation; using with earnest diligence the means of grace; professing subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ; studious in all things to serve and honour him; going about, as did their gracious Lord, doing good; loving their enemies and praying for those who despitefully use them or persecute them—you may be sure there is a something in them which others have not, a something which the worldly and ungodly cannot define and therefore deride. But who that is blessed with spiritual discernment, does not see that such persons are, as David would call them, "the Excellent of the Earth," or as Daniel says, "the Saints of the Most High?" "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord."[c] Is there any thing in a resemblance to infinite excellence to provoke disgust or to excite a sneer? "Doth not our Baptism represent unto us our

[c] 2 Cor. iii. 18.

profession, which is, to follow Christ and *to be made like unto him?*' Doth it, then, become any member (much less any *Minister*) of our Church to say, '*I hate Saints?*' While, however, "the carnal mind is enmity against God," we must not wonder at its enmity against God's *servants*, and their *godliness*. There is also another mark whereby the Saints may be known:—They will not be forward to arrogate the title to themselves. They are "called *to be* Saints," and *would be*, as "the called of God," "holy in all manner of conversation:"[d] but so sensible are they of their sinfulness; so convinced of the imperfection attaching even to their holiest things, that they dare not think themselves to have attained, either that they are already perfect, but fear, and perhaps sometimes greatly fear, that they have little or no claim to the honourable distinction and implied felicity of a—Saint.* "The Lord, however, knoweth them that are his," and in them he will eventually "fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power."

Such, then, are the Saints: and now what is their *Communion?* It is an union of heart with Christ and with one another: a secret and invisible friendship that binds them all together in and with their common Lord. They are *one* in him.[e] They are children of one Father; lovers of one Saviour; partakers of one Spirit; heirs of one kingdom, and when that kingdom comes, they will together sing one song, and their one unwearied and everlasting song will be—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us Kings and Priests unto God and his Father—to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."[f] Their Communion is confined to no Church, to no age, to no people, to no place.

* See this idea prettily treated in a little Poem subjoined to this Discourse. It is said to be written by the Rev. J. Marriot.

[d] 1. Pet. i, 15. [e] John xvii. 21. [f] Rev. i. 5. 6.

It is the breath which animates that 'Congregation of Faithful Men amongst whom the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's ordinance,' live when and where soever they may.[5] Like the air we breathe, it is found every where, and is confined no where.* If the grace of our adorable Lord visits, renews, and sanctifies some poor Indian or African, that might be a thousand or five thousand miles off; and the same grace visits, renews and sanctifies any poor sinner amongst ourselves: let those two gracious persons meet, and there would be a communion between them.† They would be found to affect the same things, to avoid the same things, to feel the same things, to desire the same things. They would seem to have but one heart, and between them there would be an union—if not of Name or Church or People, at least—of Spirit. They would "love as brethren," and as brethren would "dwell together in unity." The same lowliness of mind; the same sense of personal unworthiness; the same love of the same Saviour; the same deadness to the world; the same disposition to be holy in heart and deed; the same bias of soul towards that new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, will invariably characterise, with more or less distinctness, every one whom the Holy Ghost inspires and regenerates.

The intercourse of the Saints is very gracious and familiar. Like the Disciples on their way to Emmaus, they have "certain communications one with another" as they walk their Heaven-ward way, whilst Jesus himself not unfrequently draws nigh and walks with them—expounds to them the things which Moses and

* See Bishop Pearson on the article 'Communion of Saints' in his invaluable Work on the Creed.

† This idea is elsewhere repeated in this Volume: the Author does not study *novelty* so much as *utility* of expression

[5] Art. xix.

the Prophets wrote concerning him, and shews how the Messiah *ought* to have suffered, and through sufferings to repossess his glory.[h] Feelings, desires, hopes, joys, and sorrows, with which the people of the world are totally unacquainted, form the subjects of their converse. In vain would the Saints go to those who know not the grace of God in truth—whose minds had never been drawn up to high and heavenly things, to tell what they felt or wished or loved or enjoyed. The worldly *could* not commune with them: they know nothing of—what, perhaps, with no little pride and self-complacency they profess to believe—'the Communion of Saints.' They would marvel to hear such things. It would seem to them like talking in an unknown tongue; and they would say, probably, somewhat like Festus said to Paul, "Much Religion doth make thee mad." Whereas, Saints *with* Saints can interchange their minds; feel in so doing a delightful freedom of thought and speech, and while thus "communing one with another," they find the hours too short in which to tell of the great things the Lord hath done for their souls. *Themselves*—their joys and griefs, their failures and triumphs, their fears and hopes: Their *Lord*—his condescension, goodness, love, and truth: His *Kingdom* and *Doctrine*—how most effectually they may further the one and adorn the other: Their *Heritage*—in its future and all-glorious perfection, by turns engage the attention and occupy the converse of the Saints. True, indeed, circumstances may sometimes occur that will interrupt for a passing moment their usually harmonious concord: Though they are Saints and walk as friends taking sweet counsel together, yet perfection marks not their earthly being. While "GOING ON *to perfection*," the depravity of Nature doth remain even in them that are regenerate, and although we may be baptised and born again in Christ, yet do we offend in many things, and fail of

[h] Luke xxiv. 17.

that perfect and uninterrupted communion which the Saints will in an after state enjoy.[1] Their "communing, however will be of peace," and in desire, at least, they will 'hold the Faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.' Envy and strife will cease. All will agree to "hold the Head," and all will "rejoice in hope" of an everlasting union with their common Lord and with each other. No discordant notes shall flow from the harps of the redeemed in glory—no cloud of ignorance shall darken their intellectual vision, no opposing principle in nature shall retard their progress towards perfection, *there*. All will "apprehend that for which they are apprehended of God in Christ Jesus," and all will be "holy and without blame before Him in love."

Such, then, Beloved, is the Communion of Saints. We come to notice

II. *The Advantages of it.*

The Advantages of it are numerous and valuable. We shall confine our attention to those mentioned in our text: These are *comfort* and *edification*: "Wherefore *comfort* yourselves together, and *edify* one another, even as also ye do."

And, *first*, There is *comfort* in the Communion of Saints.

The holy and believing followers of Christ are, by no means, exempt from trials and sufferings here. Indeed *their* trials and sufferings are often more and heavier than those of others. *They* have a spiritual warfare to maintain; self to deny; a cross to bear; a heart naturally averse to good to govern; a subtle and powerful enemy to contend with; a world alluring in its pretences, and deceptive in its arts, to overcome: and amidst all opposing difficulties to maintain a conversation according to the Gospel of Christ. The

[1] Arts. ix. and xv.

Lord does not bestow his grace and spirit without meaning to exercise his gifts. "Whom I love, he says, I rebuke and chasten."[k] Abraham would never, probably, have been the Father of the Faithful, had he not been required to offer in sacrifice his beloved Son. He was "strong in faith," and his faith was severely tried. And so it is with "*the children* of faithful Abraham." They are oft times troubled, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down.[l] But, by communion with each other they comfort themselves together. As when one member of the Redeemer's body is honoured, all the members rejoice with it; so when one suffers, all sympathize and suffer with it. And as in our own body, if one member be weaker and less honourable, as Paul says, than another, upon that we bestow more abundant honour and attention: so in the Church, the weakest, the most tried and sorrowful Saint, shares the most abundant love and kindness of his fellow-saints.[m] They comfort themselves together —strengthening the weak hands and confirming the feeble knees. In consolation;[n] in pity;[o] in prayer;[p] in every thing, the Saints have, by love, a fellowship that sweetly gladdens and refreshes them. How often, it may be, have some of you, my people, been "weary and faint in your mind;" dejected and distressed on account of remaining, and sometimes, perhaps, *prevailing*, corruptions; mournful because your soul's Beloved had withdrawn his sensible presence; and ready almost to say—"There is no hope: I am sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before me; I am feeble and sore smitten: unworthy of *all*, who will show me *any* good?" In such a case you have renewed your communion with the Saints, and your communion with them has filled you with new life and love and joy. You have been comforted by the mutual faith both of you and them. You came,

k Rev. iii. 19.
l 2. Cor iv. 8. 9.
m See 1. Cor. xii
n 1. Thes. iv. 18.
o Rom. xii. 10. 16.
p Eph. vi. 18, 19.

perhaps, among them sorrowing; you went your way rejoicing. "The spirit of heaviness" has been exchanged for "the garment of praise."[q] You have said with holy David, "It is good for me to have been in trouble;"[r] and I have no doubt but the comfort you have occasionally found from the society and converse of the Lord's people, has been to you a foretaste of Heaven's eternal blessedness itself. You have felt like "a giant refreshed with wine," nor thought you then that your enemies were at all too many or too mighty for "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" to overcome. Your afflictions, too, have felt "light" and in duration momentary, compared with that "eternal weight of glory" which enemies and afflictions are designed to "work out for you."[s] Be, then, agreed to cherish still all the amity and friendliness of brethren one towards another, and thus continue still to *comfort* yourselves together."

Secondly, There is the Advantage of *edification* attending the Communion of Saints.* They not only comfort themselves together, but they *edify* one another. This is especially the case where people cannot read, or have little leisure to do so. A man, however poor and ignorant he may be, may, by conversation and intercourse with pious Christian brethren, attain, under the enlightening and hallowing influence of the Spirit, an experimental and a practical acquaintance with all the saving Truths of Revelation. If there be but desire to learn, "a wayfaring man, though a fool" as it regards worldly wisdom, "shall not err therein." And not merely in the commencement of the spiritual life, but throughout all its succeeding stages, even till grace be consummated in glory, may the Saints edify one another. Some may more deeply

* The Rev. C. Davy's "Plain Discourse on the Nature, Evidences, and Means of Edification," is very excellent.—Sold by Seeley, London.

[q] Isa. lxi. 3. [r] Ps. 119. 71. [s] 2 Cor. iv, 17.

feel their native depravity; some may more sensibly enjoy the love of Christ; some may be favoured with more abundant measures of his Spirit; some may have a livelier faith; some clearer and more extensive views of Divine Truth, for "there are diversities of gifts:" but the gifts of every man are given to "profit withal." Hence in the Church of Christ, "the hand cannot say to the foot, I have no need of you, nor the foot to the hand I have no need of you." We are all, as members of one body, needful to each other, and all our gifts and attainments, tend to the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of the body of Christ."[t] Sometimes it is humbling, sometimes encouraging, sometimes consoling, always *edifying*, to commune with believers in Jesus. Communion with them exceedingly furthers growth in grace. "Every one pleaseth his neighbour to edification."[v] "Things wherewith one may edify another" become more and more familiar to all. Such an interchange of thought, feeling, and affection, produces, sometimes, a friendship as endearing as that which subsisted between Jonathan and David.[w] Thus do the Saints by communion with their Lord and with each other in his love, "build themselves up in their most holy faith," and together "grow up in their Lord in all things." Is it not so, Beloved? Does not your experience confirm our statement? Have you not learned many a useful lesson from Communion with the Saints? And do you not believingly hope that the "top stone" of your salvation will presently be "brought forth," and the fellowship of the Church below be exchanged for the more immediate vision of your Lord, and holier communion with his redeemed people in the world above? "Wherefore, then, comfort yourselves together and *edify* one another, even as also ye do."

[t] Eph. iv, 12 [v] Rom. xv, 2 [w] 1 Sam. xxiii, 16.

Having now offered these remarks on the Communion of Saints, and the Advantages of it; I would RECOMMEND to you, in conclusion, these two things—1. Religious Intercourse, and 2. Devout Retirement. I recommend to you (1.) *Religious Intercourse.*

Observe, I say *religious* intercourse; for there is an intercourse which seems to be religious, and that really is not so. Many can talk *about* Religion and religious things; but they cannot (if we may so say) talk *Religion* itself. Many professing godliness are wanting in Christian Communion. How freely do people of the world communicate their ideas to each other! Should the people of Jesus Christ be less communicative? How unweariedly do many talk of their temporal affairs, pursuits, aims, and hopes! Should those whom the Lord calls to be saints, and endues with the riches of his grace, be silent? We are exhorted to "let our conversation be *alway* with grace, that it may minister grace to the hearer:" Is it so? Do we converse "*for the use* of edifying?"—I do *not* say we should always be forcing our religious sentiments or opinions upon others: I do *not* say we should ever be communicating our heart-experiences to any one who would be pleased to listen to them: to do so would be imprudent; but this I *do* say *the bent of our mind* should appear in all our intercourse with others. With those, however, whose thoughts are cleansed and whose dispositions are renewed by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, it should be to us a sweet and valuable privilege to "tell of the loving-kindness of the Lord," and all those things whereby one may comfort and edify another. Look unto Jesus: Every thing afforded him subject for profitable remark. A net cast into the sea; a sower going forth to sow; fields whitening to the harvest; water drawn from a well; the grave of a friend—all were remarked on by him. And surely if we were more like-minded with our Lord, we should more commonly and fearlessly "speak good of his name," tell of his

wondrous works, and see in all his works and ways and mercies a something to acknowledge and be thankful for. "We cannot, said the Apostles, *but* speak the things which we have heard and seen."[x] O that *we* may feel the like necessity!—Then, in your occasional and social meetings, cherish a *Spirit* of piety and devotion. Speak of solemn things in a solemn way. While the ungodly and the irreligious shun not to avow by all their communications with each other whose *they* are and whom *they* serve, do you not be ashamed of Christ. "Love as brethren: be pitiful: be courteous." "Let love be without dissimulation: Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." "Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another." Our wish is that you should abound more and more in love, in zeal, in faith, in hope, in every thing that befits your "high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Go on to comfort yourselves together and to edify one another *even as also* YE DO.* You may yet comfort and edify each other in the ways of holiness and truth till your Lord should have said to one and all of you "Come up higher." We would have you while you sojourn here to "warn them that are unruly, to comfort the feeble minded, to support the weak, and to be patient towards all men." So shall you, as it becometh Saints, "rejoice evermore, pray

* Truly applicable were these words to the people here addressed. Very soon after the commencement of the Author's ministry among them, some few of them voluntarily met at each other's cottages for mutual reading and prayer, after the toils and labours of the day were closed. They consulted their Minister as to the propriety of their so doing, and were entirely willing to be guided in their plan of devotions. This simple and unobtrusive Means of grace became increasingly liked, and proved most beneficial to the souls of many. It was observed once a week in eight or ten different Cottages in so many different parts of the Parish successively. If this Means needs a sanction, the Reader may find it in Mal. iii. 16—18. Mat. xviii. 19, 20.

[x] Acts iv, 20.

without ceasing, in every thing—'at all times and in all places,' as your Communion Service says—give thanks," and prove this to be "the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Having recommended Religious Intercourse, it only remains for me to recommend

(2.) *Devout Retirement.*

Without devout retirement, the life and power of religion cannot be maintained. Nothing but occasional communion with our own heart and with the Lord in secret can counterbalance the influence of the world and the world's necessary cares upon our mind. Intercourse with others even on religious accounts, will grow wearisome, unless we gird up the loins of our mind and trim the lamp of our profession at home. It is, too, in their closet that the Saints are privileged with the *most* abundant communications of the Divine presence and favour. Jesus Christ would not have said—"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet"—had not very gracious and peculiar blessings been connected with so doing. The "closet" may be *any place* where we can get alone with God. "Isaac went out into *the field* at even-tide to meditate:" *that* was his closet. Joshua went, by night, into a *valley* to pray for Israel's success while contending with their enemies: *that* was his closet. Peter went up to the *house-top* to pray; and *there* did "He who seeth in secret" meet and commune with him. In like manner may you make any place your closet, and even in the secrecy of thought may you realize your Saviour's presence and commune with him. Though he be "the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity," yet says he, "will I dwell with him also that is of a lowly and contrite spirit." Our union then is sweetest both with our Brethren and our Lord, when our minds are most thoughtfully recollected. In such a moment we covet not the wealth of worlds. We see the nothingness of

all things without God. "Our soul is satisfied, as it were, with marrow and fatness." Our strength is renewed as the eagle's: we mount Heaven-ward in desire and hope: and we have even to be "*patient* unto the coming of the Lord." It becomes a trifle to suffer shame for his sake The being called 'Saints' inspires the wish that we may be found really such. We rejoice to differ from our former selves and the generality of our fellow-sinners. Our hearts yearn with pitying tenderness towards those who so affectedly pretend to pity us. It is unspeakably delightful to feel the quickening and reviving influences of the Spirit on our minds; and we would not for a thousand or ten thousand honourable and right honourable earthly honours forfeit our saintship and lose the Spirit's love and grace and comfort. 'God hath given us of his Spirit:" follow, Beloved, the drawings of his Spirit when he would lead you into sacred solitude. "My soul followeth hard after thee," said David: So let your's. You have read the lives of Janeway, Brainard, Martyn, and others who now through faith and patience inherit the promises: Do you not remember what *they* thought of devout retirement? what *they* enjoyed alone with God? Then come ye into the secret chamber: Do so purposely to meet God there: Let your fellowship be with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ: Be often silently lifting up your heart in prayer—prayer for yourselves; your families; your neighbours; your Ministers; your fellow saints; yea, for the whole Church of your Redeemer here and every-where. Hence you will become blessed with *all* spiritual blessings. As "children of light," your path shall lead you into perfect day. From the Mount of Communion with God, you will descend to engage anew in the scenes of active life with your soul and character irradiated with Christian loveliness, and while you are "saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation," that Lord also himself will be "glorified in his Saints and admired in all that believe."

And now, "*the Communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.* AMEN."

LINES ON THE SCORNFUL APPELLATION OF THE TERM 'SAINT.'

A Saint! O would that I could claim
The privileg'd, the precious name,
And confidently take my stand
The lowest in the saintly band!

Would that the term in scorn applied,
As well the test of truth could bide,
As kingly salutation, giv'n
In mock'ry to the King of Heaven!

A Saint! and what implies the name
Thus banded in Derision's game?—
Holy and separate from sin,
To good, nay, e'en to GOD akin.

Is such the meaning of a name,
From which the Christian shrinks with shame?—
Yes! dazzled with the glorious sight,
He owns his crown is all too bright.

And ill might Son of Adam dare
Alone such honor's weight to bear;
But fearlessly he takes the load,
United to the Son of God.

A Saint! ah! sooner give some sign,
Some seal to prove the title mine:
And warmer thanks shalt thou command,
Than bringing kingdoms in thine hand.

Oh! for an int'rest in that Name
When hell shall ope its jaws of flame;
And *scorners* to their doom be hurl'd,
While scorned *Saints* shall judge the World!

How shall the name of Saint be priz'd,
Tho' now rejected and despised;
When Truth shall witness to the Word,
That *none but Saints* shall see the Lord!

DISCOURSE XX.

GETHSEMANE.*

John xviii, 2.

Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples.

In the future and everlasting kingdom of the Redeemed, the one subject of their unwearied contemplations and their ceaseless songs, will be—the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain. The great, the amazing, work of human Redemption, is that thing into which the angels desire to look; but which, even they, with all their enlarged and comprehensive powers, cannot fully conceive or understand. The love of the Redeemer to the objects of his redeeming favour "passeth knowledge."[a] Its "riches" are "unsearchable." If, for a moment, we realize the thought of God's co-equal, co-eternal, Son assuming our nature: if we place the Lord Jesus Christ before us,—contemplate

* Those who heard this Discourse will not need to be reminded that it was preached on the Sabbath immediately preceding the Author's very severe illness in 1824. The kind anxiety—the tears, the prayers, the attentions—manifested by his Beloved People on that occasion, will never cease to be most gratefully remembered by him.—It may be well also here to remark that Discourse the xxi. was preached when the Author was convalescent, and Discourse the xxii. on his return to his people after an absence of four weeks. He prays for that People individually in the words of the 20th Psalm.

[a] Eph. iii, 19.

his person, and think on his character, work, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, our thoughts are lost in adoring wonder and reverential awe. Indeed the *more* we think of him—his life of privation and sorrow, his death of ignominy and woe, and what both his active and passive obedience was designed to accomplish, the *less* we seem to perceive of "the breadth and length, the depth and height" of our Redeemer's love. All those things which our Lord both did and suffered should we contemplate. It is well, however, not to attempt too much at once; but to confine our attention to some one particular incident, and to think on others as seasons and opportunities allow. Our present subject of contemplation will, therefore, be—The Saviour's retirement previous to his betrayal and crucifixion.*

Jesus was resolved to go with his Disciples and Friends to Jerusalem.[b] With "desire He desired" to eat the Passover with them there. It was while celebrating with them the Paschal supper that he instituted the Ordinance which was to perpetuate the memory of his death till his re-appearance in the clouds of heaven, After supper he took a towel and girded himself; poured water into a basin; and washed his disciples' feet—thus significantly taking upon him "the form of a servant." He now announced his intended departure from the world to his followers. Observing that announcement to fill their hearts with sorrow, he told them of his Father's house, wherein were many mansions, and where he himself would kindly prepare a place for them. He assured them, moreover, of the expediency of *his* departure in order that another and an abiding Comforter might come to

* This Discourse was preached on the Sunday before Easter day, and was intended to precede Discourses on the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ: but the illness alluded to in the last note frustrated the Author's plan.

[b] John xi, 8.

them. And when he had prayed both for his immediate followers, and all them also who should ever thereafter believe on him through their word, he went forth, we are told, with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into which he entered with his disciples: And Judas also knew the place, for—*Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples.*

In leading your contemplations on this interesting fact, I shall notice

I. The *Place* whither our Lord resorted with his disciples:

And II. The *Purpose* for which he resorted with them thither.

I notice

1. The *Place* whither our Lord resorted with his disciples.

It was a *Garden.* This garden, we learn from Matthew xxvi, 36, was called *Gethsemane.* It was so called, perhaps, on account of the Olives growing on the adjacent hill; or on account, more probably, of its own rich and beautiful luxuriance. It was, doubtless, a retired and lovely spot. It seems plainly to have been a very favourite place with our Lord: for "Jesus *oft*-times resorted thither." Often, it may be, after the wearying labours of the day, did Jesus retire for rest and quiet to lone Gethsemane. Often might its soothing stillness be interrupted by his cries and prayers for our deliverance. There might his liberal soul devise the liberal things of our salvation. There might he more familiarly and graciously instruct the first Heralds of the Cross in the mysteries of that Gospel they were subsequently to preach to others. But, above all, there may we believe our adorable Redeemer anticipated his "treading, alone and unsupported, the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." He knew that the burden of the world's atone-

ment was upon him—he knew that he must tread the winepress alone—alone achieve our recovery from sin, degradation, and ruin. '*Here*,' then, might he think as he resorted to Gethsemane, 'here am I to suffer: here am I to agonize for man's redemption: here am I to receive a cup which may not pass from me except I drink it: here have I a baptism of blood to be baptized with, and how am I straightened till it be accomplished!' Nor is it a matter of little or no moment that Jesus was wont thus to resort to a Garden. A Divine and peculiar providence over-ruled and controuled every the most inconsiderable event of our Redeemer's life: we connot, therefore, doubt but his resorting to Gethsemane was a providential circumstance. It was in a *Garden* that the first Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, and thereby brought upon himself and all his offspring the displeasure of a justly offended God: In what place more appropriate could the second Adam sustain the wrath we merited and redeem the souls of his seed, than a *Garden?*—The Garden of Eden was a Garden of Pleasure: all was satisfying good and pure enjoyment there. Man's gracious Maker placed him in it to "till and dress it:" but alas! he proudly aspired to be "as God," and thence was driven. In perfect contrast to this, Gethsemane was a Garden of Woe: it was night when Jesus resorted thither: there was the humiliation of the Highest to restore our rebel race to honour and felicity, nor did our Lord go forth from thence till he could go forth as the prevailing Intercessor and the Almighty Saviour. Though, then, in Eden we unhappily fell, in Gethsemane we triumphantly rose. In the *one* man had alienated himself from God; in the *other* a door of access to him and communion with him was opened to us again. In the *one* the curse was first of all pronounced; in the *other* the blessing was contended for and won. Such was the place whither Jesus so oft resorted. His disciples, we may easily conceive, loved the hallowed spot: for "*with* his disciples" did Jesus

oft resort thither. And who of all his true disciples will not love Gethsemane? What though it be lonely and retired? What though the chills and glooms of night surround us? With Jesus, the Christian feels secure and happy. "In his presence is fulness of joy." Waters, clearer and sweeter far than those which refreshed Gethsemane, gladden and refresh the believing soul. These flow from "the throne of God and of the Lamb," and are indeed waters of comfort and streams of quietness.[c] Jesus loves to see his disciples with him in a "solitary place, apart" from the turmoil and uproar of a world that receives him not—he loves especially to be with them in Gethsemane; and thither especially do "those Ministers of his who do his pleasure" love to lead their people. Thither, Beloved, may you oft resort, and there may your souls hold felt communion with your present though unseen Saviour!

Having led you to contemplate the *Place* whither our Lord resorted with his disciples, I come to notice

II. The *Purpose* for which he resorted with them thither.

It was to *suffer*. This we have already intimated: but, a more particular mention of the Purpose for which Jesus resorted to Gethsemane, will not, we trust, be other than profitable to our souls.

Jesus cometh and with him his disciples into the Garden. To eight of them he says, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." Three—Peter, James, and John, he takes with him into a farther and more secluded part of the Garden. These had seen his glory on mount Tabor—had seen him there when his face and raiment shone with lucid brightness, and his essential deity was discoverable through the veil of his humanity: They were now to witness his sorrow in Gethsemane. Now it was he "began to be, in a

[c] Rev. xxii, 1. Ps. 23. 2.

manner he had never been before, *sorrowful*"—says the Evangelist Matthew,[d] and "*sore amazed*," says the Evangelist Mark.[e] "My soul, says the suffering Saviour to the chosen three, is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." His "*soul*" was the seat of agony; a deadly anguish bowed down and overwhelmed his "soul." It was "*sorrowful*," yea, "*exceeding* sorrowful;" sorrowful "*even unto death*." But wherefore, you will perhaps say, was our Lord thus sorrowful? Did not the Hebrew youths dare, unmoved, the utmost fury of their murderous enemies?[f] Did not Daniel feel composed and tranquil in the lion's den? Was not Paul ready not only to be bound but also to suffer death in the cause of righteousness and truth?[g] Has not many a martyr triumphed amidst the flames of martyrdom, and rose to glory through wrongs and sufferings the most appalling and terrific? Yes: but these had not the *purpose* to accomplish which was to be accomplished by the Son of God. The sufferings of Christ were the sufferings of the innocent for the guilty,—were the required atonement for sin,—were the ransom-price of our redemption, the payment of that debt whereof we had "nothing to pay." Our adorable Jesus was the Lamb which God provided himself for a burnt offering. His blood was at once to expiate our guilt, to satisfy the demands of infinite justice, to display a holy God's unalterable hatred to sin, and his unbounded and everlasting love to sinners. To effect this gracious purpose did Jesus Christ become our suffering Surety, and therefore it was that his soul was so exceeding sorrowful—sorrowful even unto death.

The Sacred History now goes on to say—"Jesus went a little further" into the shades of the Garden, "*and kneeled down*."[h] Nor that alone; so great was the sorrow of his soul, so intense were his feelings, that "*he fell on the ground*," and whilst prostrate "*on his*

[d] Ch. xxvi, 37. [e] Ch. xiv, 33. [f] Dan. iii and vi.
[g] Acts xxi, 13. [h] Luke xxii, 41.

face," he prayed that if it were possible his hour of suffering and woe might pass from him.[j] How wonderful was this! He to whom "every knee shall bow," himself a petitioner on his knees! He before whose awful and majestic presence "the heavens and the earth shall flee away" prostrate on his face! He that is the source and centre of all happiness and glory to his whole intelligent creation, praying that an hour of darkness and sorrow might pass from him! Surely the purpose for which this was endured must be all-worthy an infinitely good and gracious God to devise and execute. Surely, too, the application of that purpose, when devised and executed, to a sinner's soul, must be all-sufficient for the soul's necessities. O how should Gethsemane win our regards and thoughts! how should we love to "tarry here and watch" with Jesus!—But, hark: the Sufferer prays; "O my Father, if it be possible, if thou be willing, remove this cup; let it pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."[k] But, it might not pass from him or be removed: Jesus came not to do his own will, but the will of that forgiving God who sent him. Had this hour with its cup of woe passed from him, how then had the Scriptures been fulfilled? How had human guilt been expiated? How had the flaming sword which guarded the tree of life been sheathed? What blood of atonement could have sprinkled the mercy-seat, cleansed our heart from an evil and condemning conscience, and opened for us a way of access into the holiest of all? Jesus therefore resigned *his* to his *Father's* will. The cup indeed contained a portion of wrath's extremest bitterness: nature shrunk from its agony: it would fain that this cup should pass from it: but our Lord's divinity sustained his humanity, and, amidst the extreme of suffering, enabled him to say—"Not my will, but thine be done." O let our

[j] Matt. xxvi, 39. Mark xiv, 35.
[k] Matt. xxvi, 39, with Luke xxii, 42.

too often murmuring and repining hearts hence learn to be submissive. "Should it be according to thy will" concerning any thing, when the Redeemer acquiesced so readily in his Father's will concerning his cross and passion? Rather let us say, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" and remember, however bitter may be its contents, it is a *Father* who gives us the cup, and who will, if we ask him, enable us to drink it.

Jesus now "cometh to his disciples and findeth them asleep." What an additional grief to his holy soul was here! The presence of a kind and watchful friend in sorrow is cheering and consoling; but Jesus must suffer alone—unwatched, unheeded. Even to the so lately zealous and courageous Peter, is he necessitated to say, "Simon, sleepest *thou?* couldest not *thou* watch with me one hour?"[1] True; our Lord pities the weakness and unprofitableness of "the flesh;" but whilst he does so, he exhorts his followers to "watch and pray." "Let *us* not, then, sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober." We are tarrying with Jesus now in dear Gethsemane: let us watch with him. Cold and listless must be the soul that can slumber and be careless in Gethsemane. Jesus is but a little yonder suffering agreeably to the Divine purpose and grace, and effecting by the greatness of his might "the determined counsel" of his Father, and the eternal salvation of our souls. How grieved does Christ appear when he says, "*Could* ye not watch with me?" Let us beware how we grieve him "afresh" by a watchless prayerless spirit.

"He went, we read, away again"—retired again into his sacred solitude to pray. In prayer he repeated the same words. Still extreme was his suffering, and determined was his purpose: Still does he prevail to endure the hour and to drink the cup: Still we hear the voice of resignation in the words—"Thy will be

[1] Mark 14. 37.

done." He knew that if he failed in enduring now the wrath our sins deserved, we must have borne that wrath for ever: He knew that if he brake not now the head of our great Enemy, we should have continued still the dupes of Satan and the slaves of Sin: he therefore struggles on, nor yields till his own Almighty arm brings salvation to him.[m] Again does he return to his Disciples: but, finding them asleep again, he now leaves them undisturbed, and goes and prays "the third time, saying the same words." This third prayer brought him "an angel from Heaven," who appeared to him and strengthened him. His soul might possibly be refreshed by "the joy that was set before him" of glorifying his Father's attributes, and redeeming immortal though lost and perishing sinners. He might be reminded, too, of the satisfaction he should feel when he should see his Seed around his throne in the prolonged days of his eternal kingdom, and the pleasure of the Lord should for ever prosper in his hands. A gracious strength, however, is seldom communicated to the soul without being exercised. It was *after* the angel's appearance that our Lord, "being in an agony, prayed more earnestly;" and *then* it was that "his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground."[o] Now was the decisive moment come: Now were the enemy's fiercest advances made: Now was the all of our salvation to be gained or lost for ever: but with his increasing "agony," Jesus "prayed more fervently;" and though in the wondrous contest, his "sweat was, as it were, blood," yet did he triumph,—the principalities, and the powers of Hell, fell prostrate,—their hour was borne, justice was satisfied, a ruined world was saved. With "strong cries and tears," indeed, did our Lord contend; but he prevailed. Agonize, indeed, he did; but he triumphed. His blood, too, bedewed the soil of Gethsemane; but it cried—not

[m] Isa. lxiii. 5. [n] Heb. xii, 2. Isa. liii, 10, 11.
[o] Luke xxii. 44.

with a voice like that of Abel's for vengeance on the murderous Cain, but rather—"Father forgive them!"[p] And what a scene was here! A God incarnate "travailing in the greatness of his might" to accomplish a purpose, the accomplishment of which would bring everlasting honour to the blessed Godhead, fill the heavenly hosts with wonder, and every contrite sinner's heart with joy. Well may we love the place where Jesus resorted with his Disciples, and well may we delight to linger in contemplation on the purpose there effected.

Jesus cometh to his still slumbering followers and announces to them his immediate betrayal: "Behold, he is at hand that doth betray me: Rise! let us be going:" and "while he yet spake, lo! Judas and with him a great multitude" came to apprehend him. With a mind softened by sorrow and rendered now all submissive to his Father's will, Jesus advanced to meet them; and knowing the glory that should follow his further humiliation, meekly resigned himself to their power. And "he was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

But we will not now, my Brethren, follow our suffering Lord beyond the bounds of Gethsemane. Let us "tarry here" awhile; and ere we quit the place of our Redeemer's agony and bloody sweat, let us pause, and solemnly enquire how we may best improve our visit there, and the sorrows which we have there beheld.

I think, then, we may clearly perceive

(1.) *The real nature of Sin.*

Sin—*Sin*, which the generality of mankind make so light of, was the occasion of all the woe which we have contemplated in Gethsemane. Though God willeth not the death of a sinner he yet hateth his sin. As the essentially good, just, and holy God, he cannot but condemn and punish the transgression of his good, just,

[p] Heb. xii. 24.

and holy Law. Condemn and punish sin he will. His Law must be magnified either by the obedience—the sinless obedience, of his creatures, or by a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement for their violation of it. This atonement it was not in our power to make. The Lamb through whose bloodshedding the destroying Angel will pass over us, must be "without spot or blemish." This Lamb we find in the person of our Lord: He is emphatically "Jesus Christ *the righteous.*" There is a virtue, therefore, in *his* blood infinitely available for the remission of human guilt. In the very means of mercy, however, we see "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," and God's utter abhorrence of iniquity. In the woe of Jesus Christ, there is depth of suffering which we may indeed contemplate, but which we shall, perhaps, never fully understand: Then what must Sin be? In the watery deluge that once drowned the world; in the fiery ruin that awaits it; and in the "everlasting burnings" beyond the wreck of nature, we see, in some measure, what Sin is: but it is in the sufferings of the Son of God, we more distinctly perceive its turpitude. Then, O ye that *love* Sin, *live* in Sin, "*make a mock* of Sin," look yonder: Who is he that lies stretched on the ground in agony and blood? It is Jesus: Who hath thus "smitten him and put him to grief?" God; "it pleased the Lord to bruise him:" For what purpose? To expiate the guilt of your transgressions. And whilst, O Sinner, you continue willingly and wilfully in sin, you "crucify to yourself the Son of God afresh." Every oath a swearer utters; every Sabbath a Sinner breaks; every thought a man indulges that is contrary to the will and Word of God, is, as it were, a thorn, or a nail, or a spear, which pierces Jesus Christ afresh. Be it, too, remembered that though no gross immoralities may mark the outward life and conduct, yet that not loving Christ, is sin:[q] not loving his Word and the Communion of his body and

[q] 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

blood, is sin:[r] not yielding one's self a living sacrifice unto God, is sin:[s] not living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, is sin:[t] not endeavouring the good of the Redeemer's servants and followers, is sin:[v] Sins of omission no less than sins of commission, did Jesus suffer for: and unless our sins are remitted by faith in his atoning blood, the woe which he endured for an hour, we must endure for ever. Then look unto him whom ye have pierced and mourn for him as ye would mourn the loss of a first born or an only son."[w] Go with your Lord to Gethsemane, nor ever quit the Garden of his Passion till you have learnt to abhor both yourselves and your iniquities, and proved the power of a Saviour's blood to cleanse you from all your sin.

May we not also perceive

(2.) *The proper antidote to Suffering?*

This is acquiescence in the Divine will. Suffering is, more or less, the lot of all God's favoured People. "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" And shall the children of the everlasting Father be without chastisement? No: "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and correcteth every son whom he receiveth." Tribulation is the way to "the rest which *remaineth* for us,"[x] "Through sufferings, was the great Captain of our Salvation perfected."[y] We have contemplated the anguish of his soul in Gethsemane, and with how much propriety might he say, "Behold and see; was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger?"[z] And how did Jesus Christ endure the fierce anger of the Lord? By acquiescing in his Father's will, and begging with repeated earnestness that his Father's will, and no will in opposition to it, might be done. Here is our Exemplar

[r] John vi. 53. [s] Rom. xii. 1. [t] Tit. ii. 12.
[v] 1. John iii. 17. [w] Zech. xii. 10. [x] Acts xiv. 22.
[y] Heb. ii. 10. [z] Lam. i. 12.

in trying and afflictive circumstances. Have we fellowship with our Lord in his sufferings? Let us not aggravate our sorrows by "fretting against the Lord." Let us not professedly say, "*Thy* will be done," and secretly affect our own. No affliction happens by chance to the disciple of Jesus. He is "greatly beloved."[a] The "very hairs of his head are numbered." No one may do him harm, but Jehovah's eye is sensibly touched.[b] Saul persecuted the members of Christ's body upon earth; the Head in glory felt it.[c] Then, it will be our truest wisdom, under all dispensations, however troublous, to say, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." This will tend materially to alleviate our sorrows—consolation will mingle with our suffering, and being "saved from *wrath* through Christ," all other trials will be light—we shall "believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living;" and anticipate a full and everlasting deliverance from pain and trouble when our now triumphing Saviour shall have brought us with himself to glory.

But, I think, we may perceive

(3.) and lastly, *The privilege of prayer.*

It is at *all* times a privilege to pray, but it is more especially so in *seasons of tribulation.* In this also, as in every thing pertaining to the Christian character, our adorable Redeemer "hath left us an example." How often did he retire to "a solitary place apart to pray!" How did he "pour out his heart" in lone Gethsemane! Again and again did he pray; nor did he cease to pray but with his expiring breath. His prayers increased in depth of feeling and fervour with his increasing agony. Though not, indeed, answered in the particular matter of his prayer, yet was he answered in a way the most consistent with the Divine wisdom and prudence. And how pained was he with

[a] Dan. ix. 23. [b] Zech. ii. 8. [c] Acts ix. 5.

the conduct of his followers! Again and again did he exhort them to watch and *pray:* and wherefore? Because he knew full well how much watchfulness and prayer would avail for their good. I fear this same Jesus comes and finds too many of us careless and remiss. Perhaps some there are that cannot watch with him one hour, and others that are not disposed to watch with him at all. O vile ingratitude! Would it be deemed a privilege to ask some earthly Potentate a favour when and as often as we pleased? How much greater should we deem the privilege of "access with boldness to the throne of grace!" Let us cease, Beloved, to go about telling our wants and cares and sorrows to the world, and let us say as David said, "*When my soul is in heaviness, I will complain unto my* GOD;" and do as did David's Son, pray the more earnestly as our troubles increase. Troubles may be coming upon you that you are little aware of.* The pains of dissolution may be nearer to you than you suppose. Stand, then, each of you, on your watch-tower: "Be ye alway ready"—ready to obey the voice which will soon say to us all—"*Rise, let us go hence:*" and when ye go hence, may it be to follow your gracious and redeeming Lord—not to a Gethsemane of woe and blood, but—to a paradise of unmingled pleasure, untold felicity, and ceaseless praise!

* How truly verified! Never will it be forgotten how forcibly these words recurred to the Author's mind when recovering from a state of insensibility on the morning of the Thursday after the delivery of this Discourse. Amidst the most agonizing pains, the Passion of his Lord was the cordial that cheered and comforted him Let the reader cherish the memory of a *suffering* Saviour.

DISCOURSE XXI.

DIVINE CHASTISEMENT CONDUCIVE TO HAPPINESS.

JOB v. 17, 18.

Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore, despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty. For he maketh sore and bindeth up, he woundeth and his hands make whole.

How changeful and various are the incidents of human life! How like are we, my Brethren, to "strangers and sojourners upon Earth!" how subject to vicissitude! how exposed to danger! how liable to sickness, painfulness, and weariness! Now, it may be, the Sunshine of happiness beams brightly on us; our way is pleasant and our prospect fair: Anon the sky of our prosperity gathers blackness; thick and lowering clouds compass us about; our hands hang down; our knees wax feeble, and privation, suffering, and death, mark the way we go. Corrected, chastened, wounded and made sore, have *we* lately been. It is, however, permitted us to "rejoice from our sorrow." The kindness of God's mercy and truth again cheers and animates our recently sorrowing and afflicted hearts. After a painful separation from you by dangerous illness, and a consequent suspension of our delightful labours, I meet you once more in the flesh and am privileged, though perceptibly, in much weakness and with

much trembling, to say to you in the words of Eliphaz to the afflicted Job, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty. For he maketh sore and bindeth up, he woundeth and his hands make whole,"

I purpose to inquire

I. When the correction of the Almighty conduces to our happiness:
And II. Why, consequently, it should not be despised.

I am to inquire

I. *When the correction of the Almighty conduces to our happiness.*

"Behold *happy is the man whom God correcteth!*" We are wayward sinful creatures. Correction we all need. Our Almighty God and Father is at no loss for ways and means to correct us, when there is a "needs-be" for correction. The accidents, the pains, the diseases, to which we are liable, are very various. Both our minds and bodies are subjected to them; and at God's bidding the every faculty of our souls, and the every organ of our bodies, may become an instrument of correction to us: And this correction, sanctified by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, becomes to us a means of happiness when

It induces thought. It is surprising with what little thought we generally live. Of our temporal well-being—what we shall eat, what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed, we can think very readily: but, of our souls, of God, of spiritual subjects, and eternal things, how hardly can we think at all! Now, when the correction of the Almighty is upon us, it leads us to say, "Wherefore hath the Lord done thus?"[a] and to pray, "Shew me wherefore thou

[a] Deut. xxix. 24.

contendest with me."[b] Hence thoughtfulness deepens and increases: and when our minds are the most sobered, when our thoughts are the most solemnized and collected, we shall feel the happiest, and be then the least unwilling for our "*every* thought to be brought into subjection to Jesus Christ."[c]

Correction conduces to our happiness also when *it reminds us of our frailty*. We forget how frail we are—forget how soon the silver cord of life may be loosened, the eyes grow dim, the cheeks colourless, the limbs nerveless, the heart's pulsation cease, and the whole frame of our clay tabernacle be levelled with its parent dust. Now, "God knoweth our frame; he *remembereth* that we are dust:"[d] to remind us of the same humiliating truth, he wounds and makes us sore. "O," says our merciful God, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"[e] And the consideration of our latter end avails much to moderate our attachment to a world the fashion of which passeth away, and from which we ourselves are hastening. Happiest shall we feel when most sensible of our Nature's frailty, and most filled with the hope of immortality—dead to the world and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But correction further promotes our happiness when *it induces more earnest prayer*. Though we may "love the Lord because he hath heard our voice and our supplication,"[f] and though it may be our supreme felicity to meditate on God and to commune with him, yet is it no easy matter to keep alive the power and ardour of religion in the soul. Nothing but habitual watchfulness and prayer—nothing but habitual communion with God by faith in Christ, will do it. To this we are naturally averse, and this natural aversion doth remain even in them that are regenerate.[g] Few of us, I believe, there are who know not, by painful

[b] Job x, 2. [c] 2 Cor. x, 5. [d] Ps. 103. 14.
[e] Deut. xxxii, 29. [f] Ps. 116. 1. [g] Gal. v, 17.

experience, how cold and formal, how negligent and careless, we may become in prayer. Sometimes, like David, we say in our hearts, "My mountain standeth strong; I shall never be moved:" To correct this false security, God "hideth his face, and we are troubled."[h] And happy are we if by our trouble we be roused to greater and more importunate earnestness in prayer. Even if wave follows wave, and "*all* God's billows and storms pass over our souls," still happy are we if with our increasing agony, we pray, as did our Lord and Saviour, "more fervently."* The cry of "the poor destitute"—the groan of the contrite spirit, is music in Jehovah's ear. He only wounds that he may heal, and corrects that his Name may be glorified by our return to him with weeping and with supplication. When he leads us into the wilderness, it is to speak comfortably to us.[i]

God's correction, moreover, conduces to our happiness when *it raises our minds in desire and feeling above sublunary things.* The soul, chastened and corrected here, affects the rest which remains for her hereafter. We view beyond the tearful vale in which we sojourn, a world where nothing that defileth entereth, and where, consequently, all is pure unmingled blessedness. But who of all that are "taught of God," is not occasionally constrained to adopt the Psalmist's language—"My soul cleaveth to the dust," and mournfully to cry—"Quicken thou me according to thy word?"[k] To quicken us, God corrects us, and it is his "loving correction" that "shall make us great." We learn thereby to "walk by faith." The realities of an eternal world being perceived, the occurrences and pursuits of this world become, comparatively, tri-

* A purposed allusion is both here and elsewhere in this Discourse made to the preceding Discourse on Gethsemane. *That* Discourse was still fresh in the recollection of the many who were listening to *this.* May it *continue* to be so!

[h] Ps. 30, 7 [i] Hos. ii, 14 [k] Ps. 119, 25

vial and unimportant. We admire the choice of Mary, and choose the same.[1] 'In heart and mind we thither ascend whither our Saviour Christ is gone before us.' And in such a frame as this we can set to our seal that—"*Happy* is the man whom God correcteth"—that "it is better to be of a lowly spirit with the humble, than to divide the spoil with the proud."

But lastly His correction promotes our happiness, when *it endears to us the Lord Jesus Christ*. There is no pain, no loss, no any thing, whereby God corrects us, but tells us we are sinners. Our suffering is the fruit of sin; and when our sin in the universality of its extent and the depth of its malignity, is discovered to us, O how all-precious and all-desirable does Jesus Christ become! As in the deluge, the ark was the one only Refuge from the watery ruin, so when the storms of God's displeasure pass over us, Christ is the one only Saviour in whom we may "dwell safely from the fear of evil." And dear soever as might be the Ark to Noah and his family, Jesus is infinitely dearer to the humbled, sorrowing, and believing sinner. "God," we read, "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" for its redemption: And never, perhaps, do we so fully and so gratefully appreciate that gift as when we are racked with pain, worn with disease, and when, standing on the verge of time, we are about, expectantly, to wing our way into the eternal world. *Then* INDEED it is happiness to feel the Saviour precious—*then* INDEED does his preciousness appear to be, as it really is, vastly and unutterably great.

Where, then, the correction of the Almighty *induces thought; reminds us of our frailty; leads to more earnest prayer; raises our minds in desire and feeling above sublunary things;* and *endears to us the Lord Jesus Christ;* it certainly becomes a matter of thankfulness not to be "*without chastisement:*" and

[1] Luke x, 42

where these consequences, in any measure, result from "the chastening of the Lord," there surely we may say with Eliphaz, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth!"

Proceed we now to inquire

II. *Why, consequently, it should not be despised.*

It might almost suffice to say, Because it is conducive to our happiness. But we observe further, The chastening of the Lord should not be despised.

(1.) *Because it is the chastening of a Father.* "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth,"—and that—"*even as a Father the son in whom he delighteth.*"[m] A beautiful instance of his fatherly correction is afforded us in the character of Ephraim. "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."[n] A loving Father does not "*willingly* afflict" a child, or cause him *needless* grief: He is necessitated to do so by the child's untowardness, and even while he corrects him, "bowels of compassion" yearn most tenderly towards him. "In wrath God remembers mercy." Judgment is his "strange work;" mercy his "delight." Are we, then, 'in sorrow, trouble, pain, sickness, or any other adversity?' Let us not despise the chastening of the Lord. The Father of our spirits chastens us "for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness" and happiness.[o] Amidst our severest sufferings God is our Father still: and to his dear and adopted children he will ever be "the Father of mercies" and "the God of all comfort."

But let none despise the chastening of the Almighty

(2.) Because, though almighty to kill and to destroy, *God is yet almighty to save and to deliver.* He may (and we for our evil deeds do most worthily de-

[m] Prov. iii, 12 [n] Jer. xxxi, 18—20 [o] Heb. xii, 9—10

serve the chastisement) withdraw his gracious presence, take from us all sensible comfort, and "make as though he heard us not:" but "his arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor is his ear heavy that it cannot hear." A Father may "make *as though* he heard not" the cry of a corrected child: nevertheless, the cry of a broken and a contrite heart will gratify and delight him. The humbled soul shall prove that "God is love." And while God is "able to save to the uttermost," need his troubled children to despair of salvation? Witness Lot in Sodom: Isaac when virtually offered in sacrifice: Jacob when met by Esau: Israel in Egypt and during their forty years sojourn in the wilderness: David when pursued by the infuriated Saul: Peter when imprisoned at Jerusalem, and expecting his execution on the morrow: Paul at Thessalonica, and innumerable others whose names are in the Book of the Lord's remembrance. Often is 'man's extremity God's opportunity,' and by ways and means peculiarly his own, does the Lord God of Israel fight for Israel. And however seemingly against us things may be, we shall eventually prove that saying true, "All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."[p] Then, wherefore should our heart fail us under the chastening of the Almighty? Wherefore should his chastening be despised?

Another reason why it should not be despised, is

(3.) *Because God designs our spiritual good thereby.* This was the end or design of the Lord in all the afflictions of his servant Job. Severe as his afflictions were, yet "the Lord was very pitiful, and of tender mercy,"[q] and never, perhaps, had Job said, "*I abhor myself,*" and "*I know that my Redeemer liveth,*" had he not been so severely afflicted. In like manner, the Lord woundeth us, and maketh us sore, purposely for

p Rom. viii, 28 q James v, 11

the manifestation of his own eternal power and goodness *first* in the humiliation and *then* in the salvation of our souls. He perfects or magnifies his strength in our weakness. He empties us of self, to fill us with his Spirit. He tries our faith to prove its preciousness. What, then, "though it be tried with fire," yet if it be "found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," shall we despise the "fire" that tries and purifies it?[r] God discovers to us our poverty, that we may desire and value "the exceeding riches of his grace." He gives us to feel "a sentence of death in ourselves" that we may the more willingly and gratefully accept "the eternal life which he hath given us in his Son." He embitters our temporal good for the furtherance of our spiritual good; and hence appears the excellence of the counsel—"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him."

Again, it should not be despised

(4.) *Because Christ our Redeemer went before us to glory through sufferings.* Him do we "esteem stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted:" and can we expect to pass on our way through life without chastisement? Is it *not* well for the Disciples to be as their Lord? Yes, truly: and, accordingly, we are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son,"[s] and "*it is given us* (GIVEN *us*, as a peculiarly gracious and distinguishing privilege) *not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.*"[t] Then happy are we if with Paul we have "fellowship with our Lord in his sufferings!" Nothing should we despise that tends to make us like Jesus Christ. Our tribulation may be "much," but if through it we enter the kingdom of Heaven, a moment in glory will amply compensate a life of trouble here. "Many sons" will the Almighty Father bring with "the Captain of their salvation to glory through sufferings."[u] Let not, then, those suf-

[r] 1 Pet. i, 7 [s] Rom. viii, 29 [t] Phil. i, 29
[u] Heb. ii, 10

ferings be despised which liken us to the Lord our Leader and Commander. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him."

A final reason we shall name why the chastening of the Lord should not be despised, is

(5.) *Because it tends to meeten us instrumentally for glory.* While the cross and passion, the atonement and worthiness, of the Lamb, form the alone meritorious ground of our justification, acceptance, and peace; yet do we need a meetness for "the inheritance of the saints in Light." There must be a preparedness of mind for its society, its converse, and its employments. This is no where so readily acquired as in the School of affliction. In this School the Spirit teaches: and suffering is that "rod of correction" whereby he drives foolishness from our hearts.[w] When do we feel so weaned from the world,—when so fully sensible of the world's emptiness and nothingness,—when so simply dependant on a Saviour,—when so entirely satisfied with a Saviour's treasured and exhaustless fulness,—and when so earnestly desirous of another, that is, an heavenly country, as when we are in circumstances of sorrow and distress?—Look, at your leisure, into 2 Cor. iv. 15—18., and 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. and Rev. vii. 9—17. You will hence see that "all these things are for your sakes," for "the trial of your faith," "the perfecting of your hope," "the furtherance of your joy," the "separation of the precious from the vile" within you, and, consequently, the preparation of your souls for glory. I have heard of one who endured the severest pains with meekness, and while looking unto Jesus for "mercy unto eternal life," observed, 'Every pang I feel does but increase my weight of glory: let me, then, suffer on, nor dare to despise the chastening of the Lord.'

I have now inquired, When the correction of the Almighty conduces to our happiness; and Why, con-

[w] Prov. xxii. 15

sequently it should not be despised. I can only further ADDRESS

(1.) Those of you who may hitherto have despised the chastening of the Lord.

It is alas! no happiness to you to have been corrected. God hath once, yea twice, and it may be, oftener, laid his chastening hand upon you: In *body* you have been diseased and pained; in *mind* distressed and alarmed: but, so far from being the happier for it, you are, perhaps, only the more careless and indifferent. It is now a light thing with you to make promises of amendment, and to forget them. The day of your visitation passes away, and together with it all that was felt and promised. But, O remember, God's Spirit will not *always* strive with man. There is a possibility of becoming "past feeling" and being "given over to a reprobate mind." "Consider, then, your ways." Recollect the purposes of your mind as you have lain upon your beds of sickness, and when a day of gloom and sorrow hath passed over you. Think how nearly your Minister hath been taken from you, and deem it a mercy that your Watchman is permitted once more, at least, to sound in your ear the trumpet of reproof and warning. Believe me, as he lay upon the bed of languishing, he was often "horribly afraid" for some of you.* He cannot wish for you a greater good than that you may feel wounded in spirit for your sins, and burdened in conscience with a sense of your sinfulness. Better for you, whatever pains you may feel, better for you to be pained now, than for you hereafter to hear that fearful word addressed to you, "*Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!*"† If you perish, you will wonder indeed at the folly of de-

* Ps 119, 53* † Acts xiii, 41

* Which see. This text was much on the Author's mind with reference to some of his People, and with reference to *one* in particular. The faith and love of many were the joy;—the irreligion of others, the sorrow,—of his heart.

spising and neglecting the chastisements of the Almighty. But may grace be given you truly to repent and unfeignedly to believe his holy Gospel! So shall you by personal experience prove the happiness of the man whom God correcteth, and say with the Psalmist, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed."[z]

I address (2.) Those of you who may be in any trouble.*

Whatever may be your trouble, "despise" it not. Murmur not against any dispensation of the Almighty. Think that 'behind a frowning Providence, he hides a smiling face.' God loves you and therefore chastens and corrects you. It is your *own* infirmity if you think his mercy can come to an end or his promise fail.[a] It is to exercise your graces that the Lord afflicts you. Remember the sorrows ye witnessed in Gethsemane. "*Ye have not yet resisted unto blood.*" Be thankful that *your* trouble is not the punishment of your sins; that *that* was endured for you by your suffering surety, and that now there can be no affliction which the Believer in Jesus should not deem "light and momentary." It is to conduce to your happiness, that ye are wounded, corrected, and made sore. You are bidden to "behold" that it is so. Then "be not faithless, but believing." The greater your conflicts are, the more glorious will be your victory. The deeper your temporal sorrows are, the louder will be your eternal praises. "Weep not for *me*"—though I cannot but feel most sensibly your sympathy. I am indeed taken from you; but, it may be, only for a season. I shall

* Brooks's 'Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod,' is an excellent little book. Every page is consoling.

[z] Ps. 119, 67—71—80 [a] Ps. 11, 8—10

leave with you your Bible—yea, rather, the Bible's Alpha and Omega, the Lord Jesus Christ. Him you may love: Him you may commune with: with Him you may walk. While you ask for your Minister "a prosperous journey," he will not cease to "commend you to God and to the Word of his grace," and to pray that we may all, one with another, reach that happier World where He who maketh sore, bindeth up, and He who woundeth will make whole for ever.

SUBMISSION.

Submissive to thy will, my God,
I all to thee resign;
And bow before thy chast'ning rod;
I mourn, but not repine.

Why should my foolish heart complain
When Wisdom, Truth, and Love,
Direct the stroke, inflict the pain,
And point to joys above?

How short are all my sufferings here!
How needful every cross!
Avaunt my unbelieving fear,
Nor call my gain my loss.

Then give, dear Lord, or take away,
I'll bless thy sacred name,
My JESUS yesterday, to-day,
Forever, is the same.

DISCOURSE XXII.

WHEN WELL WITH US; OR, A MINISTER'S INQUIRY.

2 Kings iv, 26.

Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? it it well with thy child? And she answered, It is well.

For the particular occasion of these words, I must refer you to their preceding context.[a] You will find that a great and honourable Woman residing at Shunem, a city in the Tribe of Issachar, kindly entertained from day to day, the Prophet Elisha. "What is to be done for thee?" said Elisha, willing, by some means or other, to recompense her hospitality. She cared not to be spoken of to the King or to the Captain of his host: "I dwell, she said, among my own people," and was contented to remain retired and obscure among them. Gehazi, however, Elisha's servant, answered, saying, "Verily she hath no child." Elisha then prophetically declared that by that time next year she should embrace a Son. A Son was born to her. With many a tender feeling we may easily suppose this pious Mother to have nursed her infant boy. Doubtless she watched over him with the utmost maternal fondness, and anticipated with earnest desire and hope the unfoldings of reason, the maturity of years, and the obe-

dience of filial love, in her darling child. But—O, how invariably is tribulation the path-way to glory! —this Shunammite's Son dies; his soul is required of him, and that, ere he passes the bounds of playful boyhood: his Mother, in the recollection of the Prophet and the Prophet's promise, carries his now lifeless corpse to where the Man of God was wont to rest, and laid it on his bed. She then went out to go to Elisha. Meeting with her husband, he dissuaded her, alleging as a reason that it was "neither New moon nor Sabbath." And she said, "It shall be well." So she came to where she might probably find the Man of God, and Elisha seeing her afar off said to Gehazi, "Behold, yonder is that Shunammite: Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with thy child? And she said, It is well."

Such, briefly, was the *occasion* of our text. Now, without particularly adverting to the case of this pious woman or to the history of that holy man who found a lodging in her house, I would say, as affectionately solicitous of your welfare, *Is it well with you?* My heart's desire and prayer whilst I have been away and distant from you, ("God knoweth") hath been that it *might be* well with you: and now it is permitted me again to minister in holy things among you, allow me to enquire, "*Is* it well with thee? *is* it well with thy husband? *is* it well with thy child?" And may it be your's, my beloved People, feelingly and truly to reply, "It *is* well!"

There are two Inquiries which may very properly head our present Discourse: First, *When may it be said to be really well with us?* and Secondly, *Whether it be thus well with you?*

Let us enquire

First, *When may it be said to be really well with us?*

It may be said to be well with us when we have food and raiment, when our flocks and herds increase, when

our hills and vales stand thick with corn; when health flows through our veins and mantles on our cheeks; when our habitations are the abodes of quietness and comfort, and when the neighbourhood in which we dwell is social, kind and friendly: but, if *this* is to be well, and we are no better than "this World's good" can make us, we are well only for time, and as it respects our frail and perishable bodies. In this sense, it was well with Dives. Dives was a rich man: he was clad with purple and fared sumptuously every day: but amidst all his seeming sufficiency, he was really wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. What was his joy? Where were the riches of his soul? Did he "hunger and thirst after righteousness?" Was he clad in 'the marriage garment required by God in holy Scripture?' Did he see aught that was amiable and lovely in Religion? Was he equal—we say not in worldly wealth, wisdom, and honour; but—in excellence of character, in sterling piety, and exalted hope, with the scorned and neglected beggar that lay at his lordly gates?—As it respected the body, it seemed well with Dives; but how fared it with his soul? Temporally it seemed well with him; but was it well with him in Eternity?

For it to be *really* well with us, therefore, we must come to things which concern the soul, and which have a reference to that Eternal World whither we are going.

Have what we will without God, without Christ, without his gracious Spirit, and a hope inspired by him, of immortal glory after death, we have nothing really worth having: Whereas, *want* what we will with God, with Christ, and with that hope the Holy Ghost inspires, we have all that can make us really happy in time and for ever. And thus it may be—*as well*, shall I say? yea, rather *infinitely better* with a poor pious man in a cottage, than it is with a rich ungodly man in a palace. So "faithful and worthy of all acceptation is the saying, that *Godliness is profit-*

able unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."[b]

Mark, then, what follows: It is well with *us if our souls have been awakened;—if we have found forgiveness;—if the Lord Jesus Christ be precious to us;*—and *if we be now walking in newness of life.*

By nature we are all "dead in trespasses and sin."[c] Our Church acknowledges herself to be totally destitute of spiritual health, and prays in her Burial Service to be 'raised from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness.' In this state the Gospel finds us. Speaking by his Word, God says, "It is high time to awake out of sleep:"[d] "Awake, therefore, thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."[e] This voice quickeneth whom God pleaseth; light is communicated; darkness passes away, and the soul is awakened from its slumbers in ignorance and sin. Roused from our former apathy and carelessness, we begin to see that however well we once thought it with us, it is well no longer. Our security was danger; our life was death. We were walking on the brink of a fathomless gulph. We were enemies to God. Amidst all our professions of Christianity, we perceived not the loveliness of its Founder, we enjoyed nothing of its humbling yet ennobling Spirit. Our morals, however specious, were all unsound: they wanted "the unction of the Holy One" to give them vitality and worth; and we doubt not but they were sinful before God.[f] Our sins which we imagined to be few and venial, are numberless and heinous. Hell, from beneath seems moved to meet us at our coming; and in the anguish of our heart we cry with the affrighted Jailor,—"What must I do to be saved?" Our souls being thus awakened, we shall be led earnestly to desire forgiveness. Now, it is well with us *if we have found forgive-*

[b] 1 Tim. iv, 8, 9. [c] Eph. ii, 1, and Col. ii, 13.
[d] Rom. xiii, 11 [e] Eph v, 14. [f] Prov. xv, 8—9

ness. Forgiveness of sin *may be* found. "Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more," is the gracious promise of a gracious God:[g] and, "We *have* redemption through his,—that is, the Saviour's blood, even *the forgiveness of Sins*,"[h] is the unhesitating declaration of St. Paul. 'The forgiveness of sins' forms, too, an Article of our Creed; though alas! very few, we fear, of the many who profess to believe in it, really enjoy a consciousness of God's forgiving love. It is the privilege only of the Believer to do so, and it is well with us if we can look up to the eternal God as to our *reconciled* Father in Christ. The rebellion of a child is forgotten by a Father in the overflowing abundance of a Father's love: but the children of God themselves will "remember and forget not how they provoked the Lord:" Indeed, they are bidden to remember and to forget not their provocations:[i] and, "My soul," will they individually say, "hath them still in remembrance and is humbled in me:"[k] but yet, while they are humbled in the remembrance of their sins, they will rejoice in the mercy that spares and forgives them. And if we have obtained mercy, the Medium of mercy will be precious to us; *and if the Lord Jesus Christ be precious to us,* it is well with us—really and truly well. He comes to the penitent and sorrowing sinner, and brings with him spiritual health and cure. He binds up the broken heart; pours into its wounds the wine and oil of comfort; heals its every care; renews its every thought; and makes it an habitation for himself, through the Spirit.[l] He draws the affections and desires of the soul heaven-ward. He enriches his people with "durable riches and righteousness." He calls them "Brethren" and "Friends." Himself becomes their joy in sorrow, their strength in weakness, and their life in death. "To them that believe, he is precious:"[m] and

g Heb. viii, 12. h Eph. i, 7. i Deut. ix, 7.
k Lam. iii, 20. l Eph. ii, 22. m 1 Pet. ii, 7.

well it must be with all who feel his preciousness. True; they may have troubles to endure, and crosses to sustain; but amidst and under them, it is well. Jesus is with his Disciples in the ship, and though he may suffer the winds and waves to be tempestuous, yet can he, when he pleases speak the storm into a calm and bring his followers to "the haven where they would be." And if Christ be precious to us—if we feel our obligations to his love, obedience to him will be sweet and easy. And *if we be now walking in newness of life*, it is well with us. Naturally, our conversation is "according to the course of this world, according to the Prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past."[n] After the humiliation and justification of our souls by the Holy Spirit of our Lord, our conversation is according to the Gospel, "in simplicity and godly sincerity."[o] We cannot willingly offend a Friend whom we love—One whose kindnesses are great and unwearied, and whose pitying mercy hath passed by numberless slights and provocations.

"Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Lamb,
"The grand morality is love of Thee."

The "redeemed of the Lord" will delight to do his will. They will "have respect unto *all* God's commandments," and deem his "commandments concerning *all* things to be right." Every sin will be hated; every virtue will be loved. 'Necessarily,' says our Church, and *necessarily* do we maintain, will 'good works spring out of a true and lively faith.'[p] Holiness is the element of the new-born soul; and "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report," will be the things which the new-born soul will invariably and constantly affect, prefer, and value.[q]

[n] Eph. ii, 2—3. [o] 2 Cor. i, 12. [p] Art. xii. [q] Phil. iv, 8.

If then our souls have been awakened; if we have found forgiveness; if Christ be precious to us; and if we be walking in newness of life—if, in short, we be practically acquainted with these things, *it is well,* and *really* well with us.

Suffer me now to enquire

SECONDLY, *Whether it be thus well with you?*

You may, as you have seen, be well as it respects this world and your abiding in it. Your bodily health may be good, and you may have many years and much enjoyment in apparent prospect before you. Your worldly circumstancess too may be prosperous, and you may be adding field to field and house to house—pulling down your barns and building greater, and laying up goods in store for a long while to come. But, is it well with your *souls?* Would it be well with you, do you think, if God were now to require your souls of you? Inquire, I pray you. Have your souls been ever yet *awakened* from the sleep of spiritual death? Have you ever yet experienced a transition from Nature's gross and palpable darkness into the divine and marvellous light of grace?[r] Did the prayer 'Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord,'—ever come with warmth of feeling and earnestness of desire from your heart? Do you feel the daily renewing of the Spirit? Do all ignorant prejudices, all evil passions, and all corrupt affections, die in you; and do all things belonging to the Spirit live and grow in you? Are the eyes of your understanding opened to discern the nature, the evil, and the consequence of sin? See you your danger whilst without God and without his pardoning mercy in the world? If you have been thus awakened, it is well: if not, you cannot to our inquiry, "*Is it well with thee?*" reply in the words of the Shunammite, "*It is well.*"

[r] 1 Pet. ii. 9.

Again: Felt you ever your need of *mercy?* Has a sensibility of your guiltiness ever constrained you to seek for mercy? Have you, like her who had lost one of her ten pieces of silver, sought for it "till you have found it?" Is your heart "sprinkled from an evil conscience?" Do you daily prove the power of a Saviour's blood to cleanse you from all sin?—People often talk of God's mercy, and say—'The Lord is merciful:' So he is; but have you tasted the sweetness of his mercy? Rather, do not some of you make the Lord's mercifulness an excuse for carelessness and almost a plea for sin? If so, it cannot possibly be well with you. On the contrary, if you have desired and sought and found forgiveness, or (to come down to the lowest movement of spiritual existence) if you are desiring only and seeking to find forgiveness, it is and shall be well with you. In the language of my gracious Lord I say to you, "Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and the door shall be opened unto you." 'Miserable sinners' ye may be: but 'the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, the three Persons and the one God' of our worship and adoration, will surely have mercy upon you. "I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him."[s]

Further: What do you love most?—Christ or the world?—Christ or worldly pleasure?—Christ or the increase of your temporal wealth and honour?—Christ or yourself? What is your chief joy? The Christian "rejoices in Christ Jesus:"[t] Is he the object of *your* rejoicing? Inquire: for the object in which any one finds most satisfaction and pleasure, will commonly discover that person's real taste, disposition, and character. "Know ye, then, any thing of "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ?" See ye Christ's suitability to your soul's necessity? Feel

[s] Ecc. viii, 12. [t] Phil. iii, 3.

ye his *preciousness?* Which would ye accept if I could offer you in the one hand a million of silver or gold, and in the other Christ and his righteousness? Which could you lose most readily, your earthly all or your interest in the Son of God? Whilst his people are "a crown of glory and a royal diadem" to him, he is "for a crown of glory and for a diadem of beauty" unto them:[v] He is admired in them, and they are saved in him. "The Lord's delight is in them that fear him;" and them that fear him delight in the Lord. "The joy of the Lord is their strength:"[w] and when his countenance shines brightly on them, it affords a more abundant and sublimer gladness to their hearts than any increase of corn and wine and oil could do.[x] Does your experience confirm our testimony? If it does, it is well with you; if not, and you see "no form or comeliness in Jesus Christ, that you should desire him," you cannot to our inquiry answer, "*It is well.*"

Lastly: In what way are you *living?* The way in which we live will most clearly evidence whether we have been awakened, forgiven, and "accepted in the Beloved," or not, and, consequently, whether it be well with us or not. Now, inquire: Is your conversation "*a good conversation in Christ?*" Is the Lord's Day a delight to you? Is his Word pleasant to your taste, yea, "sweeter than honey or the droppings of the honey-comb?" Is prayer your daily and continual practice? A Christian, we believe, cannot live without prayer: Can *you?* Is it with you a privilege to approach 'the throne of the heavenly grace,' and to pour out your hearts before him that sits thereon? With humble boldness do you supplicate salvation there? Does your life accord with your prayers? This it is that manifests a new and altered state of mind. If there be a change wrought by the Spirit of God within, there will soon be a change perceptible

[v] Isa. xxviii, 5. lxii, 3. [w] Neh. viii, 10. [x] Ps. 4, 6—7.

without. "The tree will be known by its fruits:" "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?"[y] Are honesty, sobriety, temperance, meekness, brotherly kindness, yea, all the fruits of a new and gracious Nature, apparent in you? If they be, then are ye "trees of righteousness," and it is well with you. May ye be more and more fruitful in the ways of your Lord! "Herein, he says, is my Father glorified, if ye bear much fruit:"[z] May you, under the Spirit's quickening and hallowing influences, carefully avoid every thought, every word, every deed, that would dishonour the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and may ye be solicitous unweariedly to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called! And O that those of you to whom it must conclusively appear that it is not well, may be stirred up to cry, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved:"[a] Then will the Lord become your "praise," and whatever may be your earthly circumstances, you will look Heaven-ward and say, "*It is well.*"

I have now inquired, When it may be said to be really well with us, and Whether it be thus well with you. And I shall close by COMMENDING the piety of the Shunammite Woman to your notice and imitation.

"It is well!" said this woman in reply to the inquiry, "Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with thy child?" What sweet submission to the will of God does this answer evidence? She had lost her son, and that son her only child: Her heart was wrung with grief (and what heart but feels when filial and parental ties are severed?) She had yet to announce her infant's death to its fond Father, and before her lay a childless cheerless remnant of human life: and yet she says, "It is well." Hence you may learn that piety consists in *suffering* no less than

[y] Matt. vii, 16. [z] John xv, 8. [a] Jer. xvii, 14.

in *doing* the will of God. To suffer the will of God is more difficult than to do it: consequently, the resignation of our will to the Divine will in sorrowful and afflictive circumstances, indicates higher attainment in pious and devout affection than active and pleasant obedience does. To this advance in piety should you aspire. It is well when, like St. Paul, we can take pleasure—not only in easy and cheering circumstances, but—in weaknesses, necessities, and distresses for Christ's sake, knowing that the confidence of our hearts in sorrow will exalt and honour him more than when mercy beams with uninterrupted brightness on us.—This pious woman (as in the commencemen of our Discourse we intimated) went to Elisha: She fell with prostrate reverence at his feet: The man of God came with her to her house: "He prayed unto the Lord" to reanimate the now lifeless body of the Shunammite's son: His prayer is heard: and the delighted mother again embraces her beloved child. All was well: and she knew that amidst the darkest dispensations of his Providence, God was still, to those who feared and served him, the God of truth and love. Then "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God."[b] "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the Covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee."[c] Dare to believe that "*all* things shall work together," though you see not how or by what means they shall do so, for your good. Mysteriously as he sometimes works, you shall eventually say, "The Lord hath done all things well." Distressing as was the death of the Shunammite's son, yet He that smote him had thoughts of love towards him. God's design was gracious, though the means

[b] Isa. l, 10. [c] Ib. liv, 10.

of its accomplishment were painful. Be then the Psalmist's determination your's, "I will bless the Lord at *all* times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth."[d] Say to every one who would discourage your believing confidence in God, "It *shall* be well." —With herself, her husband, and her child, the Shunammite said it was well. Beautiful instance of Family Piety this! See here, ye mothers, ye fathers, ye children, how with one heart and one mind, ye should serve the Lord. One family among you has been bereaved of an infant child: "Vexed in spirit" may its dear parents be: but, is it not well with him? Would you bring his young immortal and now happy spirit back to our world of suffering again? O no; God might permit the return of the Shunammite's son for the confirmation of her faith, and the increase of her piety and devotion: but, in the light and consolation of a more full and perfect revelation, it should be your's resignedly to say, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." Pray ye to be made "*as a little child*," and then shall ye also enter the Redeemer's deathless and all-glorious kingdom. Be it the endeavour of every wife and of every husband among you to fulfil each one severally, and both harmoniously, their respective duties. Seek that it may be really well with both yourselves and children. And now that your usual means are with your Minister restored to you, use them with new and earnest diligence. As the Shunammite in her sorrow went to Elisha, so do you make your Minister your friend. Whilst "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord," we yet avow ourselves "*your servants for Jesus' sake.*" Let us altogether be agreed to imitate the imitable virtues of God's dear people, and be ready under all the various calamities incident to our mortal being, with meekness and lowliness of heart, to say, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."

[d] Ps. 34. 1.

And may the Lord, agreeably to his promise, "pour his Spirit upon your seed and his blessing upon your offspring,"[e] and enable you, "to the praise of the glory of his grace," to say from one generation to another, "It is well! It is well!"

[e] Isa. xliv, 3

DISCOURSE XXIII.

CAUSES AND CURE OF RELIGIOUS DECLENSION.

PSALM 85. 6.

Wilt Thou not revive us again, that thy People may rejoice in Thee.

A KNOWLEDGE of the times and circumstances in which many of the Psalms were written, is of great importance, of so great importance indeed, that they cannot, we are sure, be rightly or fully understood without it. It is thus with reference to the 85th Psalm, and to the verse especially which we have selected for our text.

You well know that God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, and led him to sojourn in a land which he should afterwards possess for an inheritance. To Abraham, Isaac was born: to Isaac was born Jacob: Jacob had twelve sons, and these, from being the founders of the twelve Tribes of Israel, are usually termed the twelve patriarchs: the Patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph, their brother, into Egypt: This circumstance eventually brought Jacob and all his family thither. Thence, after a period of 430 years, did the Lord bring out their descendants by the ministry of Moses and Aaron: With a high hand and a stretched-out arm did He bring them through the depths of the Sea, and ultimately into the Promised Land. There they lived a prosperous and peculiar

people through successive ages. They declined, however, in purity of principle and integrity of heart, and fell, consequently, into grossly sinful and idolatrous practices. Their Scribes and Teachers became proud, envious, factious, and malicious men. The glory of their religion was lost in the earthliness of their views and conduct. "Other lords," rather than the God of their fathers, had dominion over them. To correct their propensity to idolatry, God suffered their Land to be invaded, their city, Jerusalem, to be taken, and their beautiful temple to be destroyed. Multitudes were carried captive to Babylon. They continued in captivity 70 years, till cured, at length, of their proneness to apostacy, God raised up for them a Deliverer, Under the conduct of Ezra and Nehemiah, many of them returned to Canaan. In Ezra i, 2—4, you will find the Proclamation of Cyrus permitting their return, with directions and authority to rebuild their once-famed city and temple. Now, it was *after* the publication of this decree, and *in circumstances* such as we have related, that the 85th Psalm was composed. Thus it begins—"O Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land; thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; thou hast covered all their sins;" and then it goes on to describe the Author's exulting joy in the pardoning and restoring mercy of the Lord; and, arguing on the ground of already experienced goodness, he asks, "Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?" We may suppose them on the way to Canaan; we may suppose them wearied in the greatness of it: How natural, then, does it seem to say, "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

But, my Brethren, these words are as descriptive of our *spiritual* as they were of the Jews' *temporal* condition. *We* were captives—not indeed to a Babylonish Monarch, but, to "the god of this world," "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:" *We* were

strangers—not indeed in the land of Assyria, but, "aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, and strangers to the Covenants of Promise:" *We* groaned under a cruel and oppressive bondage—not indeed of a corporeal, but of a spiritual kind; Our hands and feet were free, but our minds were fettered: And, just as Cyrus issued a decree permitting the Jews to return to Canaan, so has our Saviour-God "proclaimed liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to the bound." Many of us have professedly "come out of Babylon"—renounced the world, and are on our way to the celestial Canaan, "the Jerusalem that is above." It may be also, we are "weary and faint in our minds," and find it in our hearts to say, "*Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?*"

In further opening and discussing our subject, I shall put my remarks under the two following heads:

I. The Causes of Religious Declension;
And II. The Means of Spiritual Revival.

We notice
(1.) *The* CAUSES *of Religious Declension:*—

That Religion does, both in Churches and Individuals, often-times, decline, is, I conceive evident both from *Scripture* and from *Experience.* The *Scripture* speaks of some that "did run well," but were hindered, so that they did not "go on to obey the truth."[a] It speaks, too, of a man dispossessed of the devil, and describes his mind as "empty, swept, and garnished," but the powers of darkness repossess their empire over him, and "the last state of that man is worse than the first."[b] We read again of some who "through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, escape the pollutions that are in the world, and are yet "*again* entangled therein and overcome."[c] Of

[a] Gal. v, 7. [b] Mat. xii, 44. [c] 2 Pet. ii, 20.

the Ephesian Converts, we read, "they had left their first love," and of the Laodiceans they were become lukewarm, "neither cold nor hot."[d]—*Experience* also evidences the same decline in Religion. How commonly do religious professors complain of having lost their first love! They lose that warmth of feeling, that ardour of desire, that buoyancy of hope, that sweet and delightful consciousness of the Divine favour, which commonly marks the earlier stages of real and spiritual piety. Our affections languish, our expectations cool, our views grow dim, and often in the language of Job do we sigh, "O that I were as in months passed, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined on me, and when by his light I walked through darkness!"[e] I have known some so to decline in religion, as almost to wish they had made no profession of it at all. Now, whence is this? What are the *Causes* of this Religious Declension? Usually, we believe, they will be found the following:

(1.) *Remissness in secret duty.* The great and learned Doddridge observes that Religious Declension may almost invariably be dated from the Closet. Persons may be interrupted and hindered in secret duty, but this widely differs from a willing and unregretted omission of it. The religion of the heart must necessarily languish, when the heart ceases to commune with itself and with its God in secrecy and retirement. Prayer in the Church, in the Family, or in the Social Circle, does not do away with the necessity of Prayer *alone* with God. Hasty, thoughtless, careless, private devotion, will, on inquiry, be found fatally ruinous to the interests of the soul.*

(2.) *Inattention to God's Word.* God's Word is the food of our spiritual existence: inattention to it,

* In the delivery of this Discourse much was said, that cannot here be repeated. The reader may enlarge in thought upon the several particulars here but briefly stated.

[d] Rev. ii, 4, and iii, 16. [e] Job xxix 2, 3, &c

must, therefore, starve the soul. We say not that poor uneducated people could read and understand every thing the Bible says; few or none, however learned, can do this: but when that which was once "the very joy and rejoicing of our heart,"[e] becomes insipid or tasteless to us, our religion must decline. It is a sure sign of ill health when we nauseate our customary food. The same simple and unadulterated truth must nourish our after progress in the christian life as nourished its beginnings. We must never have done with our Bibles, till all the Bible's verities be wrought in our heart's experience, and our souls are blessed with the fruition of all its promises. It is in his Word our Shepherd speaks, and inattention to it, will make his voice inaudible, and his voice unheard, we shall "stumble upon dark mountains," and wander we know not whither.

(3.) *Neglect of self-examination.* It is impossible but religion will decline unless its increase and perfection be desired and sought. And to insure its increase and perfection, we must often be examining ourselves. Religion in the human heart is just like a tender plant in an unkindly soil: Unless it be watched, and watched carefully too, it will wither and decay. There is nothing in our nature congenial to it; but rather every thing that is opposed to its prevalence and growth. "The root of the matter" must be "dug about and dressed; examined with circumspection and care, and watered with Heavenly influences, if we would "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." Where the inquiries, What am I? How am I? Where am I? are neglected, religion will—imperceptibly, it may be, but—surely and really, decline.

(4.) *Allowed indulgence of some favourite sin.* Perhaps all have a sin which more easily besets them, as St. Paul says, than others.[f] If this be spared and in-

[e] Jer. xv, 16 [f] Heb. xii, 1.

dulged, it will make prayers prayerless, and praises unmeaning sound. It will prove another Achan's wedge of gold or Babylonish garment in our tent.[g] It will prevent our warring a good and a successful warfare. The native evils of our heart will prevail against us, and our piety will become a poor, spiritless, joyless thing. Our Lord's direction is to "cut off a right hand and to pluck out a right eye"—to exercise the severest and most painful self-denial, rather than by the retention and indulgence of any favourite sin to "grieve his Spirit," and thereby to subject ourselves to exclusion and banishment from his presence and the glory of his power. Often may it most pertinently be said to one whose religion languishes, and whose soul "mourns sore as a dove," "Has thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way?"[h]

(5.) *Indifference to Public Means.* Some persons pretend to get above and beyond Public and Stated Means: but this is mere spiritual pride and a delusion of the Wicked One. In no stage of Christian Piety are we to "*neglect* the assembling of ourselves together." We are to "wait for the loving-kindness of the Lord in the midst of his Temple." We are to "keep holy day with them" that do so, till we exchange mortal for immortal worship. "Faith comes by hearing," and it is "where two or three are gathered in his name" that Jesus Christ has promised his special presence. Religion has its public as well as its private ordinances; and if a trifling illness, the care of a child, or the provision of a dinner, be allowed frequently to detain us from "the great congregation," our Religion will soon become formal, cold, and listless. I believe it is from an infrequent or a constrained attendance on Public Means that many a religious professor is necessitated so often and so feelingly to cry, "My leanness! My leanness!"[i]

[g] See Josh. vii. [h] Jer. ii. 17. [i] Isa. xxiv, 16.

(6.) There is one other cause of Religious Declension which we will denominate *Self-complacency*. People become seriously impressed, they apparently repent, reform, and, in the judgment of charity, they are "converted from the error of their ways." It may be they have sorrowed for their sins, prayed for mercy, and gone just so far in religion as to persuade themselves that they are now in no danger of hell, and pretty sure of heaven. But, alas for them! here they rest, and here they fall into a careless, dark, unprofitable state of mind. If there was ever any real vitality in their Religion, it now droops and dies. To the eye of sense it may still seem fair and beautiful, but it wants one thing—GROWTH, and where *growth* in grace is wanting, there will soon remain a body without a soul,—a form unblessed with the power of godliness.

Mark, then, the usual CAUSES of Religious Declension—*Remissness in secret duty—Inattention to God's Word—Neglect of self-examination—Allowed indulgence of some favourite sin—Indifference to Public Means*, and *Self-complacency*. And having noticed these, we come to notice

II. *The* MEANS *of Spiritual Revival*:—

The Means we shall specify are those which the Scriptures alone will warrant. These, we hope, many among you, Beloved, will be pleased to learn: for, even we ourselves need a revival of God's work amongst us and within us—need a "*Season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.*" We, perhaps do not feel all that earnestness in the use of Means,—that "joy and peace in believing," that pleasure in religious exercises, that delight in God, that sweet and almost impatient "looking for of Christ" and glory, which we once felt. "We see not our tokens" of spiritual prosperity,[1] and how rarely now do we hear the inquiry, "*Sirs, what must I do*

[1] Ps. 74. 9.

to be saved?"[m] Well, therefore, may we take up the words of Judah and say, "Wilt thou not revive us again?" And we are encouraged to expect a Spiritual Revival, because "yet doth the Lord devise *Means* whereby his banished be not expelled from him."[n] Some of these I now proceed to notice. Would you experience a Spiritual Revival? Then

First of all—*Recollect Yourselves.* Recollection is a great and valuable mean of spiritual good. Our minds, through intercourse with the world, through worldly and even necessary cares, and sometimes, it may be, through an undue and improper indulgence of the bodily senses, become dissipated and thoughtless. We feel weary and oppressed. Our zest for heavenly things and employments is lost. We may indeed, like Gideon's army, be pursuing, but it is faintly.[o] Now, in such a case *recollection* will avail us much. In Psalm 86 and 11th verse is a prayer just suited to a weary soul's necessity,—"Unite my heart to fear thy name:"—*unite* my heart; *gather up* its scattered thoughts; unite its fallen and bewildered powers, and let me live in the recollection and fear of thy dread Majesty. Pray this prayer, and get your heart thus united and recollected before God, and you shall yet again be revived and feel yourselves "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might."

Secondly—*Humble yourselves.* "Humble yourselves," says the Spirit by St. Peter, "under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."[p] Humiliation of soul on account of our backslidings certainly becomes us. "The mighty hand of God" must justly punish our unwatchfulness and negligence: but "He delighteth in mercy," and "He shall save the humble person."[q] It is well to humble ourselves even with fasting or abstinence from what, in ordinary circumstances, would be allowable gratifica-

[m] Acts xvi, 30. [n] 2 Sam. xiv, 14. [o] Jud. viii, 14.
[p] 1 Epis. v, 6. [q] Job xxii, 29.

tion. "I humbled my soul, says David, with *fasting* and prayer."[r] And this will be found an effectual mean to induce a genuine unaffected sorrow for sin and a tender affectionate seriousness of spirit. God himself condescends most graciously to encourage our use of this mean, saying, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall *humble themselves*, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin."[s] And with a renewed sense of God's forgiving and redeeming mercy, there will be new life and love and fervour in his service.

THIRDLY—*Surrender yourselves anew to the Lord.* "Give me thy heart," is the Lord's reasonable demand: and I do not believe that while there is any reservation of the heart for self or the world, there can possibly be real and enduring happiness. Hesitation there may be, and perhaps usually is in the earlier stages of spiritual life, in surrendering ourselves to God; but, doubtless, the more simply and the more entirely, we are enabled to do so, the more holy, the more happy, and the more lively, we shall be. It is of great avail to the soul's prosperity to be ever and anon devoting self *anew* to the Lord. Never, certainly, is a Believer so "satisfied, as it were, with marrow and fatness," as when he can most truly say, "*O God*, THOU ART MY GOD;"[t]* and never, we are sure, are we so sensibly "alive unto God" as when we practically feel the import of the words, "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."[v] "I beseech you, therefore, Brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."[w] And when you

* See a striking and beautiful Paper in Mrs. Rowe's 'Devout Exercises of the Heart' on these words.

[r] Ps. 35. 13, with which see also Ps. 69. 10, and Joel ii, 12.
[s] 2 Chron. vii, 14. [t] Ps. 63. 1. [v] 1 Cor. vi, 20.
[w] Rom. xii, 1.

want a Prayer of self-dedication, think of that in our Communion office wherein we say,—'*And here we offer and present unto thee ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee.*' *Pray* this Prayer as well as *say* it, and "the consolations of God" shall not be "small with you."[x]

FOURTHLY—*Give yourselves unto extraordinary prayer.* We may not be able to command much leisure: but, in the busiest life, time may be found to pray. Have we more to concern us than David had? And yet he says, "*I give myself unto prayer.*"[y] In addition to his prayers, "seven times a-day" did David "*praise* the Lord."[z] Surely then it can be no impossibility for us to pray. In *heart* may we often be looking heavenward, and the more frequently we do so, the more constantly shall we be favoured with the quickening and reviving influences of the Holy Spirit. Should we, unhappily, be "so feeble that we cannot *speak*," we may yet "*look* unto Jesus." "The sorrowful *sighing* of the Saints" reaches his ear; and if we only *think* believingly, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me whole," "the Lord will fulfil the *desire* of them that fear him." "Return says he, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings."[a] And to the inquiry, "Wilt thou not revive us again?" the Lord says, Yes; "I will restore health unto thee, and will heal thee."[b] Then where religion has at all declined, and any have, in any measure, been "beguiled from the simplicity that is in Christ," extraordinary and earnest prayer, will be found a most beneficial mean of good. Our strength will, thereby, be renewed as the eagle's; we shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint.[c] Even if our declension be such, that we have little or no inclination left to pray, yet let us make the effort; and though we may bow a very reluctant knee, and may be very straightened

[x] Job. xv. 11. [y] Ps. 109, 4. [z] Ps. 119, 164.
[a] Jer. iii, 22. [b] Jer. xxx, 17. [c] Isa. xl. 31.

in desire, yet it may be the Lord "will have compassion upon us," and so comfort and revive our souls that it shall again become our felt determination, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."[b] Then "Take with you words, and return unto the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously."[c] So will the Lord hear and cause you to rejoice in him anew.

Fifthly—*Attend with constancy your Public Means.* An irregular attendance on the public ordinances of Religion is the occasion of much injury to yourselves and discouragement to your Minister. Our office is—not to preach to walls and benches, but—to immortal souls, and to edify our people in the faith and practice of the Gospel of Christ. It is cheering and encouraging when we can say to a listening multitude of attentive hearers, "O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation." Would we, then, see our Zion rear her drooping head? Would we "see Jerusalem in prosperity all our days," and the Saviour's blood-redeemed Church adorned and beautified with the fruits and graces of the Spirit?* Would we see "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance" increasing within us as individuals, and amongst us as a people? Let us "not forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of *some* is."[d] Rather be it gladsome to our souls, when any say to us, "Let us go unto the house of the Lord."[e] Amiable and lovely are his Tabernacles. The more constantly we tread their hallowed floor and gaze upon his "glory so as we have seen it in his sanctuary," the more assuredly shall we "go

* Thornton on 'The Fruits of the Spirit' was a Book much read and liked amongst the People here addressed.

[b] Gen. xxxii. 26. [c] Hos. xiv. 2. [d] Heb. x. 25. [e] Ps. 122 1.

from strength to strength," and grow in preparedness of mind for the purer worship and the sublimer joy of the eternal Zion. From your closet should you come into the congregation of the Faithful; and from the use of public means should you retire to your closet again. Then would "the Lord be as the dew unto Israel: Israel would grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon: They would *revive* as the corn, and grow as the vine:" or in other words, "be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."[f]

Sixthly—*Apply to yourselves what you hear and read of God's Word.* "I have a message from God unto *thee*," said Ehud to Eglon;[g] and individuality of character will the Ambassador of Christ study to address in his announcement of the Gospel. And, therefore, "I will hear what the Lord God saith concerning *me*," should be your individual determination whensoever you hear and read the Scriptures. It is the fault of many to hear and read for others. '*That* suits such an one: *This* suits such an one,' is often the silent language of our heart whilst we are hearing and reading the Word. Whereas, we should rather say—'Does this speak to *me?* Does it condemn any thing in *my* conduct? Does it command a something which *I* do not? Does it promise any thing that *I* want?' In this way should we hear and read the Scriptures. When hearers of the Gospel become fastidious and critical, they grow cold and dull. A corrective "leanness" is sent into their souls,[h] and a word "sharper than any two-edged sword" is necessary to "try the thoughts and intents of their heart," to pierce and humble them. Suffer, then, the Word you hear to come home to yourselves: Do so, and "your profiting shall appear unto all."[i]

And Lastly—*Cherish mutual and brotherly kindness.* Communion one with another in the way of

[f] Hos. xiv. 6. 7. with 2. Pet. i. 8. [g] Judges iii. 20.
[h] Ps. 106. 15. [i] 1. Tim. iv. 15.

godliness, is sweetly refreshing to the soul. "Did not our heart burn within us," said the Disciples when Jesus drew near and walked with them on the way to Emmaus.[k] You remember our Discourse on 'The Communion of Saints:'* I would merely, therefore, now observe that "as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend."[l] See in the third and fourth chapters of Ezra how the Jews encouraged and strengthened one another in rebuilding their city and temple. In like manner may you be "building yourselves up on your most holy faith."[m] Let us pray both with and for each other. Let our "communing be only of peace." If a brother be "overtaken in a fault," do not let us spurn him from our society and converse: It is enough that he is fallen; do not let us trample on him. "Consider thyself, lest thou also be tempted" and fall. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ." His Law or Commandment is, "That ye love one another, as he hath loved you:" And, "By this, he says, shall all men know that ye are my Disciples if ye have love one to another."[n] Under all spiritual distresses, let us remember that our "*God* doth not afflict willingly;" and that, therefore, *we* should forbear to aggravate each other's woe. "He that hath torn will heal us;" and it should be our pleasure to "comfort one another."

Would we, then, that "He who hath shewed us great and sore troubles, should quicken us again, and bring us from the depths of the earth?" Would we that our Lord should revive us—"increase our greatness and comfort us on every side?"[o] Let us use the *Means* of Spiritual Revival: and wherein-soever our Religion has at all declined, let us Recollect ourselves—Humble ourselves—Surrender our-

* Discourse XIX. of this volume.

[k] Luke xxiv. 32. [l] Prov. xxvii. 17. [m] Jude 20.
[n] Gal. vi. 2. John xiii. 34. 35. [o] Ps. 71. 20. 21.

selves anew to God—Give ourselves to extraordinary prayer—Attend with constancy our Public Means—Apply to ourselves what we hear and read of God's Word, and Cherish mutual and brotherly kindness. "Come, then, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn and he will heal us; he hath smitten and he will bind us up. After two days, he will revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."[p]

I have now noticed both The Causes of Religious Declension, and The Means of Spiritual Revival. And, protracted as our remarks may seem, I yet feel unwilling to conclude without adverting briefly to the ADVANTAGE of a revived and cheerful state of mind.

I observe that this Advantage is great and estimable. To *ourselves* it will be so. We shall "rejoice" in the Lord anew. A new impulse will be given to our religious feelings and affections. We shall "delight ourselves in the Lord," whilst our love one towards each-other will more and more abound. Our Piety will be pleasant, active, and benevolent. We shall enjoy with deeper gratitude our glorious freedom. The prospect of "that goodly heritage" to which through the blood and righteousness of Christ, we are entitled, as our future and all-blissful dwelling-place, will make the wilderness in which we sojourn tolerable. And, eventually, as Judah came to the land of their fathers, so shall we come to "the *new* Jerusalem." "We shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."—*Others*, too, will share the Advantage of our revival. Seeing how lowly, how forbearing, how kind, how cheerful, are the followers of Jesus; they will be constrained to think favourably of that gracious Lord who "taketh pleasure in the prosperity of his servants," and to allow the excellence of that Religion which can make a

[p] Hos. vi. 1. 2.

fallen sinful creature so holy, so contented, so happy. Saints will be edified; timid Professors encouraged; Mockers silenced; Sinners convinced and won.—And, more than all, the *Lord Jesus Christ*, our "God over all," will be magnified by our liveliness and zeal in his service. He is not honoured by our grovelling in the dust of sense and sin. It is not his wish that we should walk in darkness. The doubts and fears, the murmurs and complainings, of a declining state, are not the songs which the children of Zion are called to sing. If our harps hang on the willows of some Babylonish stream, it is our *sin* that hath hung them there. It is because we hearken not unto him, that God casts us away, and we become wanderers and forsaken.[q] But if, when he goes and turns from us, we acknowledge our sin and seek his face, he will turn again and revive us, and cause us to rejoice in him. And how free and unmerited will be the renewal of our joy! And how sedulously should we cherish and preserve it for the honour of its gracious Donor! Every mean in our power should we use to "honour the Son." Emphatically is He "the Restorer of the breach." *His* Name it is that is "as ointment poured forth" to revive the weary and oppressed. *His* Spirit it is that must give efficacy to Means and revive us in the use of them. *Him*, therefore, should we aim to glorify in our professed subjection to him, and devotion to his service. "Forgetting the things that are behind, let us reach forth to the things that are before, and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."[r] And now, may the Lord cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit; increase in us true religion; fulfil us with his grace and heavenly benediction; make our Piety a lively, energetic, influential principle; and give it to burn with still increasing purity

[q] Hos. ix. 17. [r] Phil. iii. 13. 14.

and ardour till our deathless spirits shall be summoned to the world of everlasting life and love and glory!

NOTE.

ALTHOUGH *Self-examination* forms no particular Head among the Means of Spiritual Revival specified in the preceding Discourse, it is nevetheless *implied* in them all. The subjoined Form of self-inquiry is with deference submitted to the Reader's notice as one calculated to assist the weakness of the flesh, to clear up the state of the soul, and to further its best and noblest interests. Of course, its every particular should be separately and successively thought upon.

I. MYSELF—
1. By Nature:
2. —— Grace; and herein
My understanding;
—— will;
—— affections;
—— desires;
—— purposes;
And —— prospects both in time and in eternity.

II. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST:
My views of him;
—— dependence on him;
—— obedience to him;
—— faith in him;
—— looking for him;
And —— praying to him.

III. THE WORLD:
My feelings towards it;
—— enjoyment of it;
—— expectations from it;
—— abiding in it;
And —— dying to it.

IV. THE CHURCH:
My attachment to it
—— zeal for its prosperity;
—— regard to its Ministers;
—— prayers for all Christian Societies;
—— —— —— the Heathen;
—— —— —— Jews;
And —— —— —— universal prevalence of Christ's [kingdom.

V. DEATH:
My views of it;
—— meetness for it;
—— hope in it;
—— expectations beyond it.

And VI. THE END PROPOSED IN THIS SELF-SCRUTINY:
My acquaintance with myself and spiritual state;
—— soul's deeper humiliation;
And —— Redeemer's more abundant honour and exaltation.

DISCOURSE XXIV.

EXHORTATION TO REPENTANCE.

JOEL ii, 12, 13.

Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning, And rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

THE time in which the Prophet Joel wrote these words was remarkable. His people had greatly corrupted themselves. Sore and afflictive judgments were coming upon them. The day of their visitation was hastening on its way fraught with Divine displeasure. Fire was to devour the pastures, and flame to burn up the trees of the wood; the rivers were to be dried up and the flocks to be consumed.[a] Together with these threats of desolation, however, the Prophet was bidden to warn his people of their danger and to call them to repentance. "Blow ye,"—said the Lord, "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand."[b] Thus mercy mingles with displeasure, and we see that amidst his severest judgments, "the Lord

[a] Ch. i, 19, 20. [b] Ch. ii, 1.

our God is a merciful God," "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."[b] Nor does this apply exclusively to the people among whom the Prophet Joel sounded an alarm and blew a warning trumpet. It applies equally to us: for we all are naturally "a stiff-necked and rebellious people." Upon the careless and ungodly now no less than in other and earlier times, "a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness," rapidly approaches. "The day of the Lord is great and very terrible." The sinners in Zion shall be afraid; fearfulness shall surprise the hypocrites.[c] Still, however, does the Lord in the Gospel of his Son, say, "Repent," and beseech sinners, by the Heralds of his mercy, to be reconciled unto Him.[d] "Now commandeth he all men, every where, to repent."[e] He wills not their death, nor hath he any pleasure at all that they should die.[f] "*Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.*"

Now in these words, we have, I conceive, plainly declared

I. A duty:
II. The manner of its performance:
And III. Our encouragement to perform it.

We have declared
I. *A* DUTY.

This duty is—To turn unto the Lord: "*turn ye even unto me,* saith the Lord." Here is at once implied our alienation from the Lord our God, or our

[b] 2 Pet. iii, 9. [c] Isa. xxxiii, 14. [d] 2 Cor. v, 20.
[e] Acts xvii, 30. [f] Ezek. xviii, 23.

natural state. And we need only say that we are turned *from* HIM, to say that we are fallen, depraved, and sinful creatures—'miserable sinners,' as we are wont continually to acknowledge in the prayers and confessions of our Church. In being turned from God, we are turned from light to darkness, from holiness to sin, from blessedness to misery, from God to Satan. One of our Homilies, speaking of Man in his natural unchanged state, calls him 'half a beast and half a devil,' alluding probably to Eph. ii, 3. Our Reformers in so saying might have said with Paul, "We use great plainness of speech:" but, though plain, can we doubt its truth? Said not even the Psalmist, "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was *as a beast* before thee?"[g] and does not "*the God of this world* blind the minds of them that believe not," and "rule in all the children of disobedience?"[h] Do we naturally delight either in God or in his Law? Do we not rather feel averse to both? On the contrary, do we not find it easy to "fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind?" And wherefore, but because it is congenial with our taste and disposition to do so? Is it not the very language of human nature that says, "Make the Lord God of Israel to cease from before us?"[i] and again, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" Now, then, our duty is to "turn" from this state of alienation unto Him from whom we have so deeply revolted—"even unto ME, saith the Lord God." We are not to turn from one evil way to another, from one idol to another, from one religious profession to another; but unto GOD. *From* him we have turned; *to* him we must return. But, 'How,' you will perhaps say to us; 'How is this; Have we not been told that we can no more turn or convert ourselves to God, than the buried dead can, of their own accord, rise up and walk?' Yes; you

[g] Ps. 73. 22. [h] 2 Cor. iv, 4. [i] Isa. xxx, 11.
[k] Job xxi, 14.

have been told so; and we still say that the condition of man since the Fall is such that we cannot, by any strength or ability in ourselves, turn ourselves to God. Nevertheless, our inability to turn ourselves to Him, does not lessen or do away with our obligation to do so. There is a propriety in the exhortation "Turn ye" which our sinfulness and consequent weakness, cannot invalidate, It is, you observe, Almighty God himself that exhorts us to turn unto him: our inability to do so is our sin. And when any duty is enjoined upon us, it is enjoined *not* because we are able of ourselves to fulfil it, *but* because God is minded to shew us the deep depravity of our fallen nature, and how surely "without Him, we can do nothing."

'We cannot think a gracious thought,
We cannot feel a good desire,
Till He who spake the world from nought
The pow'r into our hearts inspire:
And then we in the Spirit groan,
And then we give Him back his own.'

His grace by Christ must prevent (or *go before*) us, to renew our will and make it good, and must work with us when we have that will.[l] *Means* of grace the Lord hath appointed and bestowed upon us, whereby we may obtain grace to do what he requireth of us. "*Turn ye unto me,* saith the Lord:" "I can do *all* things, and therefore *this,* may the contrite and believing sinner say, through Christ who strengtheneth me." When an Almighty Saviour works within us "both to will and to do," it becomes quite possible with us to "work out our own salvation."[m] "With fear and trembling"—with humble, earnest, persevering diligence, indeed, it behoves us to labour: at the same time, we may labour with assurance of ultimate success, and everlasting triumph. To his penitent and returning people, the Lord says, "How shall I

[l] Art. x. [m] Phil. ii, 12, 13.

put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father; *and shalt not turn away from me.*" And again the Lord says, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and *I will not turn away from them,* to do them good."[n] Delightful promises! Once returned unto the Lord, ye shall not turn from him again; nor will a forgiving faithful God turn away from you or cease to do you good. Persuaded of this, our duty becomes our privilege, and daily would we "take with us words and turn unto the Lord our God."

Such being the duty enjoined, we come to notice

II. *The* MANNER *of its performance*—

"Turn ye even to me—*with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God.*"

Observe, first, it is "with the *heart*" we are required to turn unto the Lord. No mere change of opinion, reformation of life, or profession of godliness, will suffice. Be it always remembered that "the Lord looketh on the *heart.*" If the *heart* be not right with him, nothing is right.[o] Many professedly turn to God; but, their profession is the "*Hail Master*" of Judas: they kiss him merely to betray him. Many seemingly turn to God on the Sabbath in the ordinary Services of the Church; but of whom God might justly complain, "This people draweth nigh to me with their *lips*, and honoureth me with their *mouth*, but their *heart* is far from me."[p] Now, such are 'dissemblers with God,' and to them God says, "*In vain do ye worship me.*"

Moreover, it is with our *whole* heart that we must turn unto the Lord our God "turn ye unto me with *all* your heart," is his command. Many persons, we

[n] Jer. iii, 19. xxxii, 40. [o] Acts viii, 21. [p] Matt. xv, 8.

believe, would turn to him, if they might do so with part of their heart only, reserving some part of it for themselves, the world, and sin. But, God will brook no rival. No other lords beside him must have dominion over us. "Ye shall find me, when ye shall seek for me with *all* your heart," is the Lord's recorded promise.[q] It is with *all* the heart, with *all* the mind, with *all* the strength, and with *all* the soul, we are taught even in our infant days, the Lord our God must be loved. This is the first and the great commandment.[r] Let not, then, the Ministers of Jesus be blamed as requiring too much of their People and as making the way of life needlessly narrow and difficult: —with "*all* your heart" does God himself require you to turn unto him: Can we do more?

And when the heart, with all its affections, motives, and desires, returns to its rightful owner, there is nothing which delights its Owner more than to see it touched with tender contrite sorrow. If angels joy over one sinner that repenteth, we may well suppose the Lord of angels to feel a peculiar pleasure when a lost and wandering soul is found. Brought to himself, and restored to the enjoyment of his Father's favour, his Father will be for ever glorified and exalted in him. Does the Lord see a poor sorrowing penitent at his feet, imploring mercy and craving to be saved? He says, "I will surely have mercy upon him." And sweetly assured are we by Zephania, "He will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing."[s] While, then, a sinner here below is turning "with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning" to the Lord, there is joy in Heaven over him.

"*With fasting*" are we directed to turn unto the Lord. I do approve of using such abstinence as will tend, through grace, to bring the body into subjection to the spirit, and further the life and power of religion

[q] Jer. xxix, 13. [r] Matt. xxii, 38. [s] Ch. iii, 17.

in the soul. It is, doubtless, a mean whereby the heart may more thoroughly be humbled, and more entirely turned unto God. It may be (and, alas! too surely *is*) unpopular in these days of degeneracy to insist on this: but, it is plainly our duty to fast. 'Yes' —some would say to us—'to fast from sin.' True; this is our duty at *all* times; but from what Jesus Christ says in Matt. vi, it is clear he expected his followers *occasionally* to abstain from meat, or what usually would be a lawful gratification of the appetite. He himself fasted.[t] His disciples, on one occasion, could not eject a devil, and the reason assigned for it is, because that kind of demon went not forth but by prayer and *fasting*—but by *unusual* means, and means which probably the disciples were not, at that time, exercising.[v] David fasted.[w] Daniel also andCornelius fasted.[x] All the first followers of Christ, in short, were "in fastings often."[y] It is a means of grace which the really devout of every age and place have been wont to use. Our Church requires it of all her members: and sure I am where occasional abstinence is practiced, it will be found a most effectual means of softening the mind into a tender seriousness, quickening the soul in the ways of Piety, and elevating the desires and hopes above temporal and perishable things. If fasting should induce mourning and weeping, a joy will mingle with our sorrow of a diviner and a sublimer kind than any joy the worldling knows. The tears of repentance bring their own relief; and much soever as may be felt while we mourn and weep for sin, we shall wish to feel still more. Self-denial is a primary requisite in the religion of Jesus Christ.[z] A meek and lowly spirit is what the Saviour engages to teach all that come to him and sit with modest teachableness at his feet.[a] "A broken and a contrite heart"

[t] Matt. iv, 2. [v] Mark ix, 29. [w] 2 Sam xii, 16.
[x] Dan. ix, 3. Acts x, 30. [y] 2 Cor. xi, 27.
[z] Luke ix, 23. [a] Matt. xi, 29.

is that sacrifice which the Lord least of all despises.[b] Indeed, brokenness and contrition of heart, is that *rending* of the heart which he requires of us. Among the Jews it was usual to express vehemence of feeling or intenseness of grief, by rending the garments: but "*rend your heart,*" saith the Lord, "*and not your garments.*" No external acts unaccompanied with inward feeling constitute contrition. We oft times hear people speak of a broken heart: but this is not that unaffected sorrow for sin which the Lord despises not. "The sorrow of the world worketh death"—it is "*godly* sorrow which worketh repentance unto life." The penitence of a truly contrite spirit, is widely different from the despair of the worldling. Hope and joy mingle with the one; gloominess and horror compose the other. Tears may bedew a Magdalen's or a prodigal's cheeks: but they will be tears for having wept no sooner, and these will the God of love and mercy wipe away. Sorrows may possess the soul and fears may distract the conscience; but they will be as the passing remnant of the storm which precedes the Sun of righteousness ere he breaks in new and resplendent glory on the humbled and returning sinner. The heart may come with fasting, weeping, and mourning to the Mercy-seat; but the blood of atonement awaits it there, and He that sits thereon hath said, "I will bring it health and cure."[c] "O Israel," will he say, "O sorrowing soul, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thy help."[d] "Return unto Me, and I will return unto you:"[e] "and whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

In this manner, then, "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon,"[f] And now from noticing The *Manner* in

[b] Ps. 51. 17 [c] Jer xxxiii. 6 [d] Hos. xiii. 9
[e] Mal. iii. 7 [f] Isa. lv. 7

which the duty enjoined is required to be performed, we notice

III. and finally, *Our* ENCOURAGEMENT *to perform it.*

"Turn ye unto me with fasting, and with weeping and with mourning, and rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God—FOR *He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.*" Beautiful words, my Brethren, these! Their every syllable breathes balm, consolation, and encouragement, to the wounded Spirit. GRACIOUS—MERCIFUL—SLOW *to anger* and *of* GREAT (O how great!) *kindness*, is the Lord our God. Beautifully accordant is this language with the Almighty's Revelation of himself to Moses whilst Moses was hid in the cleft of the rock at Horeb.[g] And all this loveliness of character do we see embodied in the Man Christ Jesus. He is Emmanuel—God manifest in the flesh. The fearfulness of Jehovah is veiled in the goodness of Jesus. The Eternal Spirit says, "Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you:"[h] and draw nigh we may, assuring our heart of a gracious reception, a merciful acceptance, a rich and an abundant blessing. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."[i] "His secret also is among them that fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant."[k] Is there, then, among you one weeping penitent? one weary sinner? one mournful soul? Thus saith the Lord to such an one, I am *gracious:* the riches of my grace are given you in my Son: Come, taste my graciousness: What want soever you may feel, I am "the God of *all* grace," and therefore of that very and particular grace you need. I am "in Christ reconciling the world unto myself:" Rend then your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God,

[g] Exod. xxxiv, 1—9 [h] James iv. 8 [i] Ps 34, 18
[k] Ps 25, 14

and ye shall find me gracious.' O what a sweet and an attractive radiancy does the Christian Faith cast around the character of the eternal Deity! and how should the assurance of his graciousness encourage our individual return to him!

But, let me further ask: Is there one to whom I speak that feels the weight and burden of his guiltiness? one that can feelingly and truly say, 'The remembrance of my sins is grievous to me; the burden of them is intolerable?' one whose bosom swells with unutterable prayer for mercy? To that one God says, "I am *merciful:* Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."[m] Groan ye may "for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage:" but He who saw with determination to deliver the affliction of Israel in Egypt, sees your sorrows also, and kindly says, "*I know them.*"[n] He will deliver you too, for "his mercy is ever more and more towards them that fear him." Vengeance, truly, is his; and he will recompence fury to his adversaries; but in the contrite and humble spirit "*mercy* shall be set up and magnified for ever." Where he is gracious, the Lord is merciful. Mercy spares whom grace redeems. And it is the sweetest portion of our Message to any lost and perishing fellow sinner whom we invite to return unto the Lord, to assure him that the Lord to whom we invite his return is merciful. Merciful! Merciful! is the Lord your God: Oh! that ye may taste the sweetness of his mercy!

But, 'O (does some poor heart-broken penitent exclaim) I have sinned so long and often; I have turned so entirely away from God; I am so sinful; I can only dread a holy God's displeasure, and can scarcely hope for mercy.' To such an one God says, "*I am* SLOW *to anger and of* GREAT *kindness.*" Judgment is a strange

[m] Isaiah i, 18. [n] Exod. iii, 7.

work with me: You fear me because you think of me only as "hating iniquity, transgression, and sin;" and, from the essential holiness of my nature constrained to do so: but, look at me in your Mediator and Redeemer: think of the blood that streamed on Calvary: think of the purpose for which it flowed: and though humbled for your crimes, and mournful for Him you pierced, you will not despair of mercy. Swift as an arrow might my anger wound you; but it is slow and reluctant in its approaches to you. Your guiltiness indeed is great: but my kindness is greater still: and "With *everlasting* kindness will I have mercy on you."[o] I smote your surety; I cannot smite you too. "Look unto me and be ye saved."[p] Need we aught more to encourage us to "arise and go to our Father?" Let us beware how we dishonour him by doubting the slowness of his anger and the greatness of his love. It must not be doubted for a moment that "the Lord is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,"[q] and that "his goodness is infinite."

Still, however, some trembling inquirer may say,—'Well; but awful threatenings are pointed against me: how shall I escape them?" Escape them! easily: for "*the Lord repenteth him of the evil*" and will never execute his threatenings of displeasure on "the souls that seek him." He repented of the evil he thought to have inflicted on the Ninevites when the ministry of Jonah led them, with fasting and with weeping and with mourning, to humble themselves before him.[r] And "Who knoweth," asks the Prophet Joel immediately after our text, "Who knoweth if he will return, and repent, and leave a blessing behind him?" And for whom would a blessing be left? For those, doubtless, who turned and sought him with desire and fervency, and whose souls were humbled

o Isaiah liv, 3. p Isaiah xlv, 22. q 2 Pet. iii, 9.
r Jonah iii, 10.

with fasting and weeping and mourning. And would not the blessing of the Lord enrich, console and prosper its favoured possessors for ever? And need they fear the execution of God's threatenings upon them? Most surely not. Then fear thou not whosoever thou art that would turn unto the Lord your God. Be not discouraged. Cry, "Turn thou me and I shall be turned." If any say, "Hold thy peace:" cry thou "*so much the more*, Thou Son of David have mercy on me."[s] Doubt not but he will soon command thee to be brought unto him, and when he says, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee;" thou mayest ask what thou wilt, and it shall be done for thee. Thy sins shall be whelmed beneath oblivion's wave, and "the days of thy mourning shall be ended." "For, thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."[t]

Such is The duty; The manner of its performance; and Our encouragement to perform it, as declared in the text before us. In closing, MARK

The dreadful consequence of final impenitence.

Let us suppose a sinner never to turn unto the Lord; never to humble himself with fasting and weeping and mourning for his sins: Let us suppose him to resist all the beseeching intreaties of a merciful and gracious God to repent and to believe the Gospel: Let us suppose him to despise and reject the Saviour, to grieve the Spirit, to quench the Spirit's influence, and to go on in the perpetual love of himself, the world, and sin: Let us suppose him, finally, to die in this state of hardened impenitence,—O who can conceive the consequence of a life and death such as we have supposed? What despairing horror, what agonizing dread, must seize an

[s] Luke xviii, 39. [t] Isaiah lv ii, 15.

unforgiven soul in the moment of its departure hence! Fain would it, doubtless, turn unto the Lord; but "the door is shut" and no knock can open it. Fast would it now, and weep and mourn, and that with bitterness, if fasting, weeping, and mourning would avail it aught: but, no; the cries and groans of penitence in hell reach not the ear—win not the notice, of a slighted and forgotten God. Mercy is withheld; vials of wrath are poured forth. Refuse the finally impenitent may, the cup of God's displeasure: but, "*it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup to drink, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Ye shall* CERTAINLY *drink.*"[t] If any man soweth to the flesh, he *shall* of the flesh, reap corruption. What he sows, he shall reap. If he bow not to Jesus here, he shall kneel to him hereafter. If he weep not now for sin, he shall weep in hell. If he obtain not mercy and find not grace in this world, the God of grace and mercy will cease to be such in the world of future retribution. And never will he repent him of the evil he thinks to do to the finally impenitent: no, *never:* for while "the righteous shall go into life eternal, the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment."—"Therefore, also, *now* saith the Lord, turn ye even unto me." "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?" "Blessed, truly, are them that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Gracious, kind, and merciful, is our God. "If ye will return, return,"—is his message to us. Oh! then, let us arise and go unto our Father: "We, as workers together with him, beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." We warn you from him: and we bid you mark the consequence of final impenitence in hope that you yourselves will truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel.

[t] Jer. xxv, 28.

DISCOURSE XXV.

THE MANNER OF LOVE BESTOWED UPON US.

1 John iii, 1, 2.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but, we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

There is a worth, a grandeur, a blessedness, in Religion, of which people in general have little or no conception. Many think Religion very well in its season, and some time or other, it may be, they purpose to be religious. If the convenient season ever comes, a somewhat more regular attendance on Public Ordinances; a more frequent perusal of the Scriptures; a little reformation of the outward conduct, and perhaps an occasional participation of the Communion, quite suffices them, and constitutes the sum total of their Religion. As to the amazing mysteries of the Christian Faith, and their practical influence on the heart and life, they remain in dark and dismal ignorance. Indeed it is wonderful, and can only be accounted for on the ground of our natural depravity, that we have eyes to see any thing but the things which belong to our peace; ears to hear any

thing but the true sayings of God, and attention to give to any thing rather than to that "one thing" which alone is really essential and absolutely necessary. Say I this of myself? Is there no proof for our assumption? Observe and see. How many are there who can give most entirely and heartily six days of the week to the world and to their worldly occupations and pursuits, and who yet find it hard to give one, two, or three hours of the Sabbath to spiritual and heavenly employments! How many are there, too, who can give great and continued attention to reading of a light and frothy kind, who yet take up the Bible with reluctance and read it as they would read a dry uninteresting book! How many, again, are there who can sit with raptured willingness till the midnight hour in a theatre, or some other resort of fashionable folly, and see and hear the veriest, most filthy and abominable trash, who would yet be pained and wearied and inconvenienced to sit an hour in the house of God, and under the ministration of his "glorious Gospel!" And notwithstanding all this glaring inconsistency, we must not, forsooth, dispute the title of such inconsistent persons to the Christian name, nor be allowed to doubt the reality of their religion. But, Ministers of the Truth must be faithful. Amidst all the arrant ignorance, the cruel prejudice, the cold formality, and the self-devised piety, of the world, they must "lift up their voice," and "spare not" to unfold the deep deceivings of the carnal mind, to make manifest the dark disguises of hypocrisy, to detect and, if possible, to defeat the subtle devices of the enemy, and to guide the humble and devout inquirer into the truth of God. We must be imitators of Him who in boundless and eternal mercy said, "Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by his name—a rebellious people, which walked in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts."* "Be-

* Isa. lxv, 1, 2.

HOLD!" must we say to a thoughtless and deceived generation, if haply they may be roused to inquiry and concern, and "God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth."[b] "*Behold,* then, *what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*"

In these words we see somewhat of the nature and excellence of real Religion; and from them we shall be led to notice

I. The *manner of love* which the Father hath bestowed upon us:
II. The *consequences* which flow to us from that love:
And III. The *attention* with which the whole should be regarded.

Let us notice

I. The *manner of love* which the Father hath bestowed upon us.

God himself is "love." A more sublime idea,—an idea more pregnant with simple grandeur and blissful truth, was never couched in words, than when the beloved disciple said, "GOD IS LOVE" But our concern at present is not with God as being love in his essence, or in himself "the altogether lovely;" but rather with the manner of love he hath bestowed upon us. This we say is

(1.) A *sovereign* love. God is a sovereign—"the great and only Potentate." He has, therefore, a right to act as a sovereign and to bestow his love where,

[b] 2 Tim. ii, 25.

when, and on whom he pleases. This he does without accounting to any one for his bestowment of it. He "called Abraham alone" from amongst his idolatrous kindred.[c] "Jacob, says God, have I loved, but Esau have I hated:" the *one* shall inherit a land flowing with the milk and honey of rich and profuse abundance; the mountains and the heritage of the *other* shall be laid waste for the dragons of the wilderness.[d] We are saved according to a "purpose" formed in Jehovah's mind before the foundation of the world was laid.[e] 'We are chosen in Christ out of mankind, to be brought by him to everlasting salvation as vessels made to honour.'[f] And in his choice, God acts sovereignly, bestowing his love, as we have said, when, where, and on whom he pleases. Without, in the smallest measure, infringing on the responsibility of the creature, or his hereafter judgment "according to the deeds done in the body:" Admitting, too, with the utmost readiness, that Almighty God has "no pleasure in the death of him that dieth," whilst "his tender mercies are over all his works:" his love is, nevertheless, confessedly, peculiar and distinguishing; though, however peculiarized and distinguished some may be, we admit not that injury is done to others. Where all deserve to perish, no one has a right to complain. God will be justified when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth.[g] There is not now an individual member of the Saviour's holy and catholic Church but will cordially adopt the language, "*We love him, because he* FIRST *loved us:*"*[h] and in the day of the consummation of all things, when God's sovereign love shall be fully manifest, it will doubtless be the acknowledgement of all—"Thou art righteous, O

* If the Reader think otherwise, he is at liberty to love God first *he can.*

[c] Isaiah li, 2 [d] Comp. Rom. ix, 13, with Mal. i, 2. 3.
[e] 2 Tim. i, 9. [f] Art. xvii. [g] Ps. 51. 4.
[h] 1 John iv, 19.

Lord, which art, and wast, and shall be, because thou hast judged thus: Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints."[i]

(2,) The love which the Father bestows upon us is a *gracious* love. He *bestows* it: we neither earn nor merit it. There could be nothing in sinful unholy creatures to win the favourable loving-kindness of a God "glorious in holiness" and supremely blessed. Nor could sinful unholy creatures do aught either to avert displeasure or to deserve grace.[k] The promise of a Seed that should bruise the serpent's head, was given even without solicitation on the part of man. and with the same gracious freedom was that promise subsequently renewed in after ages, until the pre-appointed moment when the celestial Visitant said to the virgin mother, "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS."[l] And still are "all concluded under sin." "There is no difference" naturally in our state, and there would be none but for the manner of love our Almighty Father hath bestowed upon us. The people of Israel found grace in the wilderness:[m] and it is "the grace of God which bringeth salvation" to his people in every age.[n] Graciously doth he deal with us; graciously doth he grant us his Law; graciously doth he take away our iniquity, and graciously doth he receive us.[o] So that we may salute the every child of God's gracious adoption, and say in the words of the Angel to Mary, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured!" or in the words of the Angel to Daniel, "O man, greatly beloved:" And sure we are every one so adopted and beloved will readily acknowledge with St. Paul, "*By* THE GRACE OF GOD *I am what I am.*"[p]

But (3.) the love which is bestowed upon us is a *redeeming* love. "God so loved the world that he

[i] Rev. xv, 3 and xvi, 5. [k] Art. xiii. [l] Luke i, 31.
[m] Jer xxxi, 2. [n] Tit. ii, 11.
[o] Gen. xxxiii, 11, Ps. 119. 29, and Hos. xiv, 2. [p] 1 Cor. xv, 10.

gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."[q] And the Son of God "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us."[r] "And hereby perceive we the love of God (the Son), because he laid down his life for our sakes."[s] This is the wondrous proof of Divine love. Had we been merely told that the Father loved us with a sovereign and a gracious love, we might, indeed, have been gratified and pleased with the tidings; but possibly a doubt whether the infinitely holy God could love such utterly unworthy creatures as we feel ourselves to be, might have marred our gratification and pleasure. As it is, we are assured our Father loves us. Christianity is "*a dispensation of the grace of God;*"[t] and in the voluntary humility, the suffering life, and ignominious death, of Jesus Christ, we see how much he loved us—with what manner of love, and how mercifully he designed our redemption from sin and wretchedness. Yes; in our Redeemer's incarnation—in the dangers of his infant days—in the persecutions of his maturer years—in the anguish of Gethsemane—in the mockery of Herod's judgment-hall—in the thorny crown—the scourge, the cross and all its untold agonies, we see the *manner* of love wherewith our Father loved us. We see it, too, in the mission of the Spirit to quicken and regenerate our souls. We see it in that Eden of delight which stretches prospectively before us into realms of glory. We see it in the deadening of our affections towards things seen and temporal and the drawment of our minds Heaven-ward. We see it in all these things, and in the every of his multiplied mercies, that "in his *love* and in his pity he *redeems* us."[v]

(4.) The Father's love toward us is, finally, an *everlasting* love. "From everlasting to everlasting is God's mercy upon them that fear him."[w] We may

[q] John iii, 16. [r] Tit. ii, 14. [s] 1 John iii, 16.
[t] Eph. iii, 2. [v] Isa. lxiii, 9. [w] Ps. 103. 17.

heap millions of ages upon millions of ages, and through and beyond them all will the love of God towards his redeemed and believing people be extended. True; he will remind us of our base original—point us to "the rock whence we were hewed and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged," and "cause us to know our abominations"--but, he will say, "Now when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I looked upon thee, and, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. I washed thee: I anointed thee: I clothed thee: I decked thee: thou wast exceeding beautiful: thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty; for it was perfect through my comeliness that I put upon thee, saith the Lord God."[x] In accordance with this peculiarly striking Scripture, Paul says, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,"[y]—while we were yet "ungodly," "polluted in our own blood," morally and spiritually unclean, did our Almighty Father love us; because he loved us he "drew us (for "no man cometh unto the Son except the Father which hath sent him, *draw* him,"[z]) as with the cords of love and with the bonds of a man" to his Son.[a] In Christ we are accepted, and in him we are "complete."[b] The meek and lowly does God beautify with salvation.[c] Over them he "rests in his love, and rejoices even with singing:" and of them individually does he say, "I have loved thee with an *everlasting* love, THEREFORE with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."[d] Hence whom the Lord loved, he still loves, and will love on for ever. It cannot be that the Lord should *forget* to be gracious, or that his promise should fail. It is our own infir-

[x] Ezek. xvi, 6—14. [y] Rom. v, 8. [z] John vi, 44.
[a] Hos. xi, 4. [b] Eph. i, 6. Col. ii, 10. [c] Ps. 149. 4.
[d] Jer. xxxi, 3.

mity if we think the contrary.[e] The life he gives us in and through his Son is an *eternal* life; and through its eternally enduring ages will God bestow his love in still richer and more abundant measures on the souls of the Redeemed.

Mark, then, *the manner of love* which the Father hath bestowed upon us; It is a *sovereign*, a *gracious*, a *redeeming*, an *everlasting* love.

We notice

II. The *consequences* which flow to us from that love:—

The consequences which flow to us from the sovereign, the gracious, the redeeming, and the everlasting love of the Father, are inconceivably great and glorious. Two only are named in our text: to these we shall confine our attention. These two consequences are—the *one, Present adoption into God's family:* the *other, Future restoration to his image.*

There is, first, *Adoption into God's family:*—"*that we should be called,*" says St. John, "*the sons of God.*" God has a family—a family of happy and rejoicing children.[f] In 2 Cor. vi, 18, we read of the "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty." A name even better than that of sons and daughters is promised to them who keep the Sabbaths of the Lord and take hold on his Covenant.[g] And "because ye are sons," says Paul to the Galatian converts, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your heart, crying, Abba, Father!"[h] This is that "Spirit of adoption"[i] which reveals the Father's love, sheds abroad a reciprocal affection in the regenerate heart, testifies of Jesus, loosens the bands of wickedness, sets the oppressed prisoner free, seals us unto the day of our full redemption, and "witnesses with our spirits" that we are really and truly the adopted children of the eternal Father. And

[e] Ps. 77. 8. [f] Eph. iii, 15. [g] Isa. lvi, 4. 5.
[h] Ch. iv, 6. [i] Rom. viii, 15.

what a privilege is this! Who can conceive its value? who can describe its glory? "CHILDREN OF GOD, *and if children, then* HEIRS: *heirs* OF GOD, *and* JOINT HEIRS WITH CHRIST." And of what are his children heirs? Of "*glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life.*" O world in which we sojourn, what are your riches, titles, pleasures, friendships, compared with this? O how all-inferior are ye to "the goodly heritage" of the sons of God! And observe, "Beloved: *now* are we sons of God," *now* are we such; it is a *present* consequence of our Father's love. If our earthly Sovereign were to stoop from his exalted throne, and notice kindly one of your poor children; adopt him, provide for him, and confer upon him some earthly dignity; it would occasion much remark and gratulation, doubtless, among the friends and neighbours of your child: but how beneath the condescending goodness of the Lord and the glory of his adopted children, would this be!—It is true, our ennobling privileges, our unfettered hopes, our brilliant prospects, come not under the observation of the world: "*the world knoweth us not.*" It knew not God when he "was manifest in the flesh." "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." It cannot, therefore, be expected that his children should be known and received. In fact, they are commonly despised and rejected. Their motives are misjudged and deemed insincere; their conduct is misrepresented and condemned. As to their peace, and joy, and hope; the source of their placidity, and the end of all they suffer, the world is totally ignorant. It is, however, because the world is swayed by the Prince of darkness, and its pitiable subjects "know not the Lord," that therefore "it knoweth us not." But, blessed are the sons of God, though the world be ignorant of them and acknowledge them not. With personal appropriation can they look up to the dread I AM, "the Lord of lords, and the King of kings," and say, "*Our* Father." With conscious joy do they possess "the redemption that is in

Christ Jesus." Love is the habitual disposition of their mind. Kindliness is the sphere in which they move. They "walk with God as dear children;" and in the world they are as the blossoms of the rose which cheer and enliven the world's moral and spiritual desert.[k] Religion with them is no outward unmeaning thing; it is a felt and powerful reality. We admit, indeed, that in our present state of imperfect being, we are but *heirs*—not *possessors* fully of our goodly heritage. We are under "tutors and governors" now—under discipline and correction: but when "the time appointed of our Father is come," we shall inherit all that the sons of God are "by grace through faith" entitled to possess. For, as another consequence which flows to us from our Father's love, there is

Secondly, a *Future restoration to his image:* "it doth not yet appear what we shall be—how great, how holy, how happy; but we know that, *when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is.*" In his image, we were originally formed; to his image it is our Father's purpose to restore us. "*In the image of God* created He man:" "To be conformed anew *to the image of his Son,*" are we declared to be predestinated.[l] It is *now* the great Regenerator's office to renew within us the moral likeness of the Deity: by and by the Saviour whom we look for from Heaven, will appear and "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."[m] "The time of the restitution of all things" approaches; the new Heavens' and the new Earth's Creator is on his new creating embassage; the "Behold, I create all things new" will soon meet the listening ear of his dear children; the morning of an endless day will soon dawn upon the dark and dreary tomb, and as it hastens on its way, the every child of God may say, "As for

[k] Isaiah xxxv, 1. [l] Gen. i, 27. Rom. viii, 29.
[m] Phil. iii, 21.

me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."[n] Satisfied shall we be with our God and with all his dealings towards us: satisfied with ourselves; with our abode; with our company; with our employments;—fully and for ever satisfied. We shall "*see God.*" We shall "*see him* AS HE IS." Nor that alone: the beatific vision will be transforming in its influence upon us. As the excellencies of the Godhead become manifest to our adoring gaze, we shall become like the excellence we adore. Think who it is that says this: it is John; it is the loving and beloved Disciple—*that* Disciple who had witnessed the transfiguration of his Lord on the holy mount; that had seen the new Jerusalem; had seen the multitude of the redeemed from the Earth, and heard their voice as it had been the voice of many waters or of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia!—it is *he* who says "when we see him we shall be like him." And, O, who can conceive what these few and simple words imply! Ponder over them as much and long as we please, our meditation must close with the acknowledgement of John, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." It must suffice us now to know that when we see our Lord, we shall be like him. Mansions; kingdoms; crowns; await the sons of God in glory. Their inheritance is "an inheritance in light." What makes our world a world of suffering and sorrow? The darkness of ignorance and sin. What will make our Heaven hereafter? The presence of God and of the Lamb. "God is Light:" "the Lamb is the Light thereof:" His children are "children of light and of the day." "There shall be," says St John, "*no night* there."[o] No: the brilliancy of an eternal noon prevails in Heaven. We shall there "know even as also we are known"—be "perfect as our Father is perfect," and "holy as He who hath called us is holy." "As we *have borne*

[n] Ps. 17. 15 [o] Rev. xxii, 5

the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." This world may not know us, acknowledge us, love us: we shall be known, acknowledged, and beloved there. *That* world will know *us* because it knows our Lord. He is well known there as the sun and centre of celestial blessedness: and we shall, too, be known as the objects of our Father's sovereign, gracious, redeeming, and everlasting love. The uttermost of his salvation shall we prove, and joy for ever in the *consequences* of that love which the Father hath bestowed upon us.

Having noticed The manner of love which the Father hath bestowed upon us, and The consequences which flow to us from that love; it remains only to notice

III. And finally, The *attention* with which the whole should be regarded.

We may be sure that, in general, where the word "Behold" occurs in Scripture, there is a something annexed to it worthy of our closest attention. And to what with more propriety could "Behold" be affixed than to the manner of love which the Father hath bestowed upon us and to the consequences which flow to us from it? With reverent and profound attention, then, let us regard these things. Whilst the religion of the many is so superficial and defective, let us seek to have our minds imbued with the Spirit of the Gospel. To this end, I would say, Do not be satisfied with any attention with which you may regard the truth unless it *deepens your humility, strengthens your confidence, and excites your love.*

Your attention should *deepen your humility*. "As the elect of God, holy and beloved," we are exhorted to put on "*humbleness of mind.*"[p] Contemplation on undeserved favour tends materially to produce this. The more we see of God; his love; his truth; his

[p] Col. iii, 12.

grace and faithfulness, the more lowly in our own eyes shall we become. It was when the Lord God was "pacified toward Israel," that Israel was to "remember and be confounded, and never open his mouth any more because of his shame."[q] In like manner, if we have any evidence of God's love within us—if our heart be sprinkled from an evil conscience—if we enjoy a consciousness of the Divine favour, and feel at peace with all above us and about us, it should lead us each to say, 'Why *me*, Lord, why *me*? Why pass by the angels that kept not their first estate, and assume *my* nature? Why pass by, too, millions of my fellow-creatures, and fasten thy regards on *me?* Why do *I* choose thee while so many reject thee? How am *I* within the door of mercy, whilst others neither knock for admittance nor care to come when called? What has changed *me* from a rebel to a child? Why does the cross of Jesus so comfort and delight *my* soul, while many with indifferent heedlessness crucify him afresh? Why do *I* look for thine appearing, Lord, while many dread thy coming? O why am I thus, and whence is my Lord so gracious and merciful to *me?*' Reasoning such as this will tend to deepen your humility. You will lie low before the Lord. Grateful and admiring wonder will fill your souls. The manner of love bestowed on you will appear to be as it really is, a marvellous mercy. Like Abraham you will confess yourselves to be "but dust and ashes."[r] Like Jacob you will say, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercy and of all the truth thou shewest me."[s] Like Paul you will feel yourselves to be "less than the least."[t] With Zechariah you will exclaim, "How great is his goodness!"[v] or with John, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!"

[q] Ezek. xvi, 63. [r] Gen. xviii, 27 [s] Ib. xxxii, 10.
[t] Eph. iii, 8 [v] Ch. ix. 17.

Your attention also should *strengthen your confidence.* We are very far from recommending a presumptuous confidence. Some persons, it pities us to say, can talk of the love and the grace of God with great fluency of expression, and much apparent earnestness of manner, and yet evidence a very unhumbled spirit and live a very unchristian life. Now, this we call a ruinous self-deception: or might, perhaps, more properly denominate, a satanic delusion. No: the grace of God which bringeth salvation teacheth us to deny ALL ungodliness and worldly lusts. Every man that hath a hope in God, purifieth himself, even as he is pure:[v] and such an one may most surely confide in the power and love and mercy of the God for whom he waits and in whose likeness he trusts to awake. Doubts and fears do not certainly honour a Father of mercies and a faithful God. Their *indulgence*, we believe to be sinful, because they implicate the veracity of God, and oppose the prevalence of his Spirit's consolation. To increase, then, your confidence, contemplate attentively the manner of love bestowed on you. Think how free, how full, how changeless, is that love. Think of your present adoption into God's dear family, and your prospective glory. To your weakness, oppose your Redeemer's strength; to your sinfulness his righteousness; to your poverty his riches; to your doubts his promises. Think how ye were loved while yet ye were aliens, foreigners, and strangers both to your God and to his covenant. Mark the 14 and 19 verses of the chap. whence our text is taken, and be ambitious to say as unhesitatingly as the beloved disciple said—"*We* KNOW; *we* KNOW." Only behold the love of God and see yourselves interested in its consequences, and then may you believe yourselves addressed in that beautiful passage, wherein your Father himself speaks to his adopted children, saying, "Be strong and of a good courage:

[v] See Context.

be strong and very courageous; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."[w] "I *know*," should you individually aspire to say, "I *know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."[x] In *that day* will you receive your 'perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul,' and prove that thrice repeated declaration true—"*And my people shall never be ashamed.*"[y]

Your attention, in fine, should *excite your love.* "The love of Christ" was the grand and constraining principle of St. Paul's conduct. It was his apology to those who thought his and his fellow-labourer's zeal excessive.[z] And it is this, only this, principle of love, that will make obedience willing and delightful. Whatever, then, will, as a means, increase our love to our God and Saviour, should be greatly valued and carefully improved. Now, the Holy Ghost will bless to you devout and earnest attention to the manner of love bestowed upon you. While you muse, the fire will kindle.[a] It is here the religion of the generality is so defective: it wants the ardour and the warmth of love. The works of a watch, however exquisitely made, will not answer their intended end without a mainspring: In like manner, the forms of religion, however apostolical or correct, will avail but little, if love do not animate the whole. How, do you ask, can we love an *unseen* Saviour? I answer, easily. If one whom we never saw nor had an opportunity of seeing, did us a kindness, spake favourably of us, and bestowed on us, through another's mediation, some needed help, should we not feel, when informed of his beneficence, the kindlings of a grateful affection in our heart towards him? Suppose this friend to be our Almighty Father:—let us think upon his love in

[w] Jos. i, 6. 9. [x] 2 Tim. i, 12. [y] Joel ii, 26, 27.
[z] 2 Cor. v, 14. 15. [a] Ps. 39. 3.

Christ Jesus towards us: could we do so long, unmoved? Should we not rather realize the sentiment of Peter in his 1 Epis. i, 8?* And from contemplating our Father's love in Jesus towards us, we ourselves should become lovely—lovely in temper, lovely in conduct. Enemies would again be compelled to say, 'See how these Christians love one another!' Our religion would be deep, energetic, and influential. It would then be no difficulty to forego every thing that is opposed to a Father's will and pleasure. His word; his day; his ways; his children, would all be loved. Suspect your regard to the love bestowed upon you, while you yourselves remain cold and unaffected. Meditate upon it till you can truly say, in the language of a favourite hymn,

"Jesus, my soul adoring bends
To love so full, so free:
But may I hope that love extends
Its sacred power to me?
What glad returns can I impart
For favours so divine?
O take my all—my worthless heart,
And make it only thine."

* The Author knows nothing more admirable on the admission, use, and exercise of the affections in Religion than Section II. Chapter III. of Wilberforce's Practical view of Christianity. To this the Reader is referred.

DISCOURSE XXVI.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES URGED.

Acts xvii. 11. 12.

These were more noble than those at Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed.

In the xvi. chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we have some account of Paul and Silas's travels. After visiting the cities of Derbe and Lystra, and travelling through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia, they came into Macedonia. At Philippi, a large and beautiful city of Macedonia, they halted. Persecution, however, awaited these Preachers of the Gospel there. Though a certain woman named Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened, attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul, yet others whose iniquitous gains were endangered, rose up together against Paul and Silas, and committed them as troublers of their city to the common prison. Stripes, however, imprisonment, and scorn, cannot greatly affect the happiness of believers in Jesus. "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God." Nor was God inattentive to the voice of their prayer and the melody of their praise. Miraculously did he interpose for the

delivery of his servants: and through his wonder-working power, the Jailor himself was constrained to bring Paul and Silas forth, and to inquire, "Sirs, what must *I* do to be saved?" Leaving him and all his house converts to the faith and love of Jesus Christ, they called on the pious Lydia; saw their few despised brethren; comforted them, and departed. Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came, we read in the xvii. chapter, to Thessalonica, where was a Synagogue of the Jews, and where Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. Here, too, was the enmity of the carnal mind roused and excited against the holy humbling truths of the Gospel. A regular process of persecution was commenced against Paul and his companion. This envious and malicious interference, induced the Brethren immediately to send away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea, (another city of Macedonia) who coming thither, went as they were wont, into the Synagogue of the Jews. Now, *The Bereans were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed.*

This is the passage of holy Writ we purpose to consider; in our consideration of it, we shall mark particularly these three things:

I. The *disposition of mind* with which the Bereans received the Word:
II. The *conduct* which it led them to pursue:
And III. The *effect* which their pursuit produced.

Let us mark

I. The *disposition of mind* with which the Bereans received the Word.

They "received the Word with *all readiness of mind.*" The aversion which human nature feels to

the Truth of God was destroyed in the Bereans. They felt their helplessness and were willing to be led. Dissatisfied with their present imperfect views, they prayed for further and more satisfactory information.[a] By revelation, Paul assuredly gathered that the Lord had called Silas and himself to preach the Gospel unto them. Coming to Berea, they found the Bereans assembled in the house of God. They were together present before the Lord to "hear words whereby they might be saved." The mind of the hearer was as soil prepared for the seed—ready to receive what the Preacher should be disposed and influenced to say. Paul, doubtless, remembered among the Bereans his determination to "know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified."[b] If he, by no means, gloried in any thing, save only the cross of his Divine Master, we may naturally suppose that Paul "preached Christ"—*Christ* in all his essential excellence and peculiar glory; *Christ* in all the variety of his characters and offices; *Christ* in all the aboundings of his love and truth and mercy, unto the Bereans. Many things which Paul might say, were probably new to them: apparently, too, opposed to their sentiments and contrary to their habits and pursuits; but, such was the docility and teachableness of their mind, that they were willingly content to be *hearers* not *teachers, learners* not *judges*. They were assembled to get good to their souls, and to be made wise unto salvation. This was the disposition wherewith the Bereans received the Word; and this *ought to be*, let me observe, the disposition of mind with which all should hear it. But, IS IT? Is not, rather, the Ministry of the Gospel usually attended with little or no readiness of mind to receive it? If it were otherwise, whence is it so few, comparatively, receive the Word, or get any real and enduring good by our ministration of it? We preach the fall of man, his

[a] Acts chap. xvi. 9. 10. [b] 1 Cor. ii. 2.

apostacy and ruin; but, who believe and feel themselves fallen, "alienated from God by wicked works," and, while destitute of a personal interest in the only Saviour, ruined and lost for ever? We declare the nature, the prevalence, and the consequence of sin; but, who feels its "exceeding sinfulness," and "flees from the wrath to come" as he would fly from a pile of burning buildings? We publish "glad tidings"—tidings of great and joyous import—tidings which would honour an angel from the realms of glory to announce; but, "Who," (may we with Isaiah ask) "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"[c] We assure our hearers of the transitoriness of all things here below, and point their hopes and expectations to a world of eternally enduring friendship, pleasure, and enjoyment; but, who 'loosens from earth the grasp of fond desire' and affects that fulness of joy and those ever flowing rivers of delight which are at God's right hand in glory? And why is this?—*why* is our Word so ineffectual? It is because our hearers have so little readiness of mind to receive it. The minds of the generality are either as soft as water or as hard as rock. If you dip your finger in water, an impression will be easily made: the moment you withdraw your finger, the impression vanishes. You may, too, pour water upon a rock, but it all runs off; it never penetrates and fructifies the stone. In like manner, many hearers of the Word are easily impressed, whilst others remain hardened and unmoved: but the impression of the former is evanescent, and the latter continue still "the stony ground" whereon sow what we will, no fruit is brought forth unto perfection.

Now, it is this too easy or too careless disposition which we wish to correct. In order to correct it, suffer me to remark, that as surely as the *preaching of the Word* is a weighty and important thing, so surely is

[c] Ch. liii. 1.

the *hearing of it.* People too commonly think a Sermon to be *a thing of course;* and consequently, hearing a Sermon becomes also a thing of course. They have little idea that they *themselves* are spoken to in it, and that Almighty God sends, by his Ministers' instrumentality, a message unto them individually. Hence, our Word is heard, and heard, it may be, with somewhat of a grateful feeling; but almost immediately and without any painful reluctance, it is forgotten. No "honest and good heart" receives it. It finds no lodgement in a memory tenacious of spiritual ideas. It is not recollected and digested in the thoughtful seriousness of the soul. It vibrates with the Preacher's voice upon the ear, and with the Preachers voice it dies away.[d] We fear the Word is gone from many a hearer's mind ere the threshold of the Church is passed. And if, *without* the walls of our sanctuary, in any place where an ignorant and misjudging World conceives we are not specially licensed to "rebuke, to reprove, to exhort," and to persuade, we presume to speak on the great and glorious things we are commissioned to proclaim, 'O,' it is said, 'we do not want your preaching.' Now is this becoming? Is this to 'receive with meek heart and due reverence God's holy Word?' Is it treating the accredited 'Messengers, Watchmen, and Stewards of the Lord' with even common respect? Does it not, rather indicate a mind all unready for the seed of Divine Truth? Can there be in such hearers of the Word the disposition of the Bereans? "Judge your own selves." "Be not hearers of the Word only." Do as the Bereans did: hear impartially; hear teachably; hear with readiness of mind to *receive* what you hear; hear for your edification in the faith of Jesus Christ; hear for eternity; hear as those who must one day account to the Lord and Master of our Assemblies for all you hear.

[d] Ezek. xxxiii, 30—33.

From consideriug The *disposition of mind* with which the Bereans received the word, we come to consider

II. The *conduct* which it led them to pursue.

They "*searched the Scriptures daily*" in order to see whether the things affirmed by Paul were really so or not. The Scriptures which the Bereans possessed were merely the Writings of Moses and the Prophets. From them, however, they had learned that God would, sooner or later, "break the Serpent's head," that is, destroy the power of Satan, by some mysterious one emphatically denominated, "THE *Seed of the Woman.*"[e] They knew also that God would, in due time, raise up for them, among their brethren, a Prophet that should, like their great Lawgiver, Moses, found and promulgate a new dispensation of grace and mercy:[f] that "in his love and in his pity he would redeem them, and that by a far more signal redemption than either their redemption from Egypt or from Babylon:[g] that unto them a child should be given and a son be born whose name should be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace;[h] that this Prince or Messiah should be cut off, but, not for himself:[i] that on the third day after his decease, he should rise again;[k] that notwithstanding all the opposition of men and devils in combination to prevent it, he should yet reign as the King of Zion;[l] have a people to serve and honour him;[m] and whilst exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, there should be given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him.[n] They could find too in their Scriptures God's recorded promise to create the heart anew; to succour the tempted and to save the humble person;[o] to call his servants by a *new* name;[p] to send preachers

[e] Gen. iii, 15. [f] Deut. xviii, 15. [g] Jer. xxxi, 31, &c.
[h] Isaiah ix, 6. [i] Daniel ix, 26. [k] Hos. vi, 2.
[l] Ps. 2. 6. [m] Ps. 110. 2—3, [n] Dan. vii, 14.
[o] Isaiah lix, 19. [p] Isaiah lxii, 2

of his Word abroad into the earth;[q] to pour out his Spirit upon all flesh;[r] to create all things anew and once again to restore, order, harmony, friendliness and beauty, throughout the visible creation.[s] These things the Bereans knew, and therefore they "searched the Scriptures" to see how far and in what respects the statements of St. Paul accorded with the written Word of God. Nor did they indolently do so: So cautious were they about receiving what they heard, and so desirous that whatever they received should be strictly analogous to the Truth, that they searched the Scriptures "daily." They heard the Word and it was their wisdom to be assured of its Divine original, and ultimate design. Using, with lowliness and sincerity, the only infallible Means of information, that sweet promise which their sweet Psalmist records, was fulfilled to them—"*The meek will He guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way.*"[t] So true it is, "They that will *do the will* of God, shall know *of the doctrine*, whether it be of God."[v]

Now here I cannot but say, "Go ye and do likewise." Here is an example of earnest and devout enquiry worthy of our closest imitation. Paul and Silas were inspired by the Holy Ghost to teach what they taught, and were, consequently, preserved from error in their communication of the Gospel: And yet the Bereans searched the Scriptures, and that sedulously, to see whether Paul's Word agreed with God's Word, and the things he spake were agreeable to scriptural truth. Much more, then, ought ye to pursue this conduct. *We* come, indeed, duly authorised and commissioned to preach the Gospel to you: but we can boast no *extra*ordinary inspiration, and therefore we may err. Bring then what you hear from us to your Bible. In addition to the Scriptures of the old Testament, you have the Scriptures of the New. These together form that "testimony" to which the Bible's Author himself directs you to refer.[w] Then, when we

[q] Dan. xii, 4. [r] Joel ii, 28 [s] Isa. xi, 5—9. lxv, 17
[t] Ps. 25, 9. [v] John viii, 17. [w] Isaiah viii, 20.

tell you, as we plainly and unhesitatingly do, that you all, without exception, are fallen, sinful, unholy, creatures; search the Scriptures for the truth of our assertion.[w] When we say that carnal ungodly men—the "wise in their own conceits," the worldly, the "high minded, and the lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;" need not go to hell *to be* condemned, because they "*are* condemned already;" see if it be so or not.[x] When, moreover, we require in you a great moral and spiritual change—a change so great and absolutely necessary, that without it you can neither "joy in God" and delight yourselves in Him on earth, nor be admitted into the immediate presence of the Lord in glory; search and inquire whether a word more authoritative than our's says not the same.[y] When we insist on the necessity of repentance and such a repentance as is inducive of unfeigned faith in the Gospel and an entire change of outward conduct; look and see if He in whose Name we speak requires not the same.[z] When, too, we tell you that Christ is "all in all" a sinner's justification and salvation; take not our Word for it: Search the Scriptures, and see if it be not written there as with a sunbeam that *nothing*, NOTHING, but the worthiness of the Lamb can give us a title to life and happiness.[a] When we affirm that holiness—personal holiness, conformity of mind and conversation with the mind and Word of God, as that alone which can evidence a justified state, and fit the soul for Heaven, is necessary; let your Bible determine our position.[b] When we assure you that there is in the cross of Jesus Christ an atonement for sin of vast and illimitable sufficiency and worth—that in the bleeding wounds of Him who suffered on it, the contrite soul may find repose and comfort;—that

[w] Gen. vi, 5. Jer. xvii, 9. Gal. v, 19—21.
[x] John iii, 18. 1 Cor. vi, 9, 10. [y] John iii, 1—7.
[z] Joel ii, 12, 13. Luke xiii, 3. Acts iii, 19.
[a] Acts iv, 12. 2 Cor. v, 21. Gal. ii, 21.
[b] Heb. xii, 14. Jam. ii, 14—26.

peace of conscience; hope, yea, assurance of hope; motive to obedience; joy in sorrow; life in death, and triumph in eternity, are all derivable from a Saviour's blood and righteousness; why, heed not what "certain lewd fellows of the baser sort" may say, but inquire and see for yourselves whether these things be so or not.[c] And when all our teaching comes sanctioned and enforced by the tremendous verities of an hereafter reckoning, and we solemnly declare that if lost, the soul must remain lost and undone for ever, and that it is only by a cordial and practical reception of the Word, it can be saved from guilt and condemnation; why, surely, methinks you should not but search the written Records of inspiration and carefully inquire how far our assertions accord with them. Then SEARCH them: nor do so reluctantly, as though it were a labour or a task to do so, but diligently, and that "daily," and as if your everlasting *all* depended on your right apprehension and belief of the truth. Let me ask—If you received a letter from a dear and distant friend, would it lie long unopened by you? If *you* could not read it, would you not be desirous that some one should read it to you? And if there chanced to be in it "some things hard to be understood," would you not, if it were in your power to do so, ask somebody to explain them to you? You know you would. How should this, then, shame and confound many of us when we think of our neglected Bible! Therein we have many letters—letters of unspeakable value—letters filled with "exceeding great and precious promises"—and these letters come to us from our soul's eternal and unchangeable Friend; and yet, O yet, how coldly do we receive them! how negligently do we read them! how commonly do we slight and forget their sayings! Much of the holy Scriptures might be *heard* by many who could not, perhapss *read* them for themselves: but, alas! how

[c] Rom. xv, 13. Eph. ii, 14. John xiv, 27.

many a Minister reads the Word of God to almost nobody, rather than to a listening multitude of attentive hearers. And when we are ready and willing (according to the ability our Lord hath given us, and so far as we ourselves are taught) to answer the inquiry, "*What is Truth?*" how many will ask a hundred questions about comparative trifles, rather than say as the Jailor at Philippi said—"*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*" Then would you know whether the things we affirm be agreeable to the Scriptures or no; "Search" them; and that not merely on a Sunday, as if our religion and our search after religious truth, were to be confined to the walls of the Church and to the hours of the Sabbath; but "daily." The Bereans "searched the Scriptures daily:" this was the conduct they pursued: do you pursue the same. Say not 'We have no time:' You have time to be idle? you have time to talk; you have time to read other books;—find time to read the Word of God. Remember, *that* alone is truth which will endure a Scriptural test. It is Scripture too that will try our principles and conduct in the judgment of the last day. Then see to it whether these things be so; nor rest satisfied without a well-grounded persuasion of the reality of your religion and the safety of your state.

Such was *the conduct* which the hearers of Paul pursued: and it now only remains for us to notice

III. The *effect* which their pursuit produced:—

"*Therefore many of them believed.*" "Also," we are informed "of honourable women who were Greeks, that believed, and of men not a few." Delightful effect of honest and impartial inquiry after Truth! Well worthy of our particular attention is this. Some will say to us: 'We cannot give ourselves faith: The Word of itself cannot profit us: How many hear the things you preach to whom they do no good whatever.' True; but the Word is in our power to use:

we may hear and read and search it, if we please. And hearing, reading, and searching the Scriptures is a *means of faith*,[d] and it is in the *use*, not in the *neglect* of the means that God communicates the grace of faith. We allow, many do hear the things which we affirm, to whose spiritual good they apparently avail nothing; but, how can they profit? there is within them no readiness of mind to receive the truths we preach, nor any disposition or inclination to search the Scriptures whether these things be really so or not. The rule of inspiration is to, "*Compare spiritual things with spiritual*;"[e] and from a comparison of one with another to become "fully persuaded in our own mind" concerning every thing which the Word of God reveals, inculcates, and requires. Bearing too in mind "the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End" of all revelation—searching in the field of Scripture for the hid treasure of Christian knowledge, and willing every where to find the gracious and almighty Friend and Lover of our souls, the Scriptures will prove their ability to make us wise unto salvation.[f] "The power of the Highest will rest upon us"—"open to us the Scriptures," and "open also our understandings to understand the Scriptures." Hence our spiritual being will be sustained and perfected on the fulness, the richness, the preciousness, of the Word of God. Unhappily, ignorant and pernicious prejudices are entertained by some persons against the Truth. They know it not, nor care to know it: they believe it not, nor care to believe it. Unkindly rumours, it may be, reach them concerning the Gospel and the Gospel's professors, and immediately, without any thing like the liberal and prudent inquiry of the Bereans, they are offended. Like the Jews and others at Thessalonica, they are pre-disposed against the truth. If they hear it, they hear it suspiciously; and having no readiness of mind to receive it, they

[d] Rom. x, 17. [e] 1 Cor. ii, 13. [f] 2 Tim. iii, 15.

condemn it without further solicitude or concern about it. *Because* our manner is to "reason out of the Scriptures," and to maintain with constancy the needs be for Christ's humiliation, sufferings, resurrection and intercession, *therefore* "an uproar is raised;" the "decrees of Cæsar" are declared to be impugned, and the ministry of the Gospel is vilified and contemned. But, does conduct such as this become any who professedly assume the name and character of Christian? How different was the conduct of the noble-minded Bereans! We see them attending their Synagogue; hearing with respectful deference the things affirmed by Paul; treasuring them carefully in their memories; returning to their homes—not quarrelling with the *matter* of what they had just heard or with the *manner* of its announcement (for Paul himself tells us that his "*bodily presence was*"—*inelegant*, we may suppose;—"*weak and contemptible*"—he calls it) not abusing the Apostle as a "setter forth of strange doctrines;" not hardening their heart and closing their eyes against the Truth—but examining all they had received by the written Word, and that daily with much anxiety and carefulness. The effect which, as it were, naturally resulted from such pleasing and impartial conduct was—"*many of them believed*," and "*therefore*" believed, inasmuch as they used the proper and ligetimate means of belief. Thus while the enemies of the Lord and of his Christ, were hardened in sin and confirmed in unbelief, the Bereans became humble, holy, happy, and devoted followers of the Lamb. Nor can we doubt but the same means, used with the same openness to conviction and readiness to receive the Word, would produce the same effect at any time and in any place. We should believe indeed did we but search the Scriptures daily, in God's appointed way, in meekness, and with readiness of mind. There would then be something more than mere assent to the Word among our hearers. There would be a spiritual perception of the truth; a personal interest

in it; a sweet and grateful enjoyment of it. Our hearers would not be "*forgetful* hearers:" and hearing under the powerful and efficient "unction of the Holy One," their faith would increase, and ripen gradually into a full and entire credence of all the Bible's verities. The prayer of Jesus Christ would be answered in the believers of his Gospel—"Sanctify them through thy Truth; thy Word is Truth:"[g] and "having its many and precious promises, you would cleanse yourselves from all filthiness both of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God."[h] O that thus it might be! We would not, Beloved, I again repeat, that "your faith should stand in the word of man, but in the Word of God." Man is weak and fallible: God "cannot lie." Examine then the things ye hear. Wisdom is promised to them that search for it.[i] If ye haply find "the Wisdom which cometh from above," it will prove its excellence. The mockeries of the fool, the arguments of the infidel, the sneers of the worldling, will not move you. Like the Eternal's Friend, you will be "strong in faith, giving glory to God."[k] "Haters of God" and "despisers" of his Truth, there were in the Apostles' days: "A Seed of evil doers" there still exists, and *will* exist till the Lord shall consume them with the brightness of his coming."[l] Care not, however, for their "revilings." You are expressly told that "*revilers* shall not inherit the kingdom of God:"[m] In that kingdom they shall not molest you. "Consort," whilst here, "with them that believe," and part with your life rather than with "the Truth as it is in Jesus." Let its sacred depository be dear to you. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this Book, and keep those things which are written therein."[n] This the Spirit saith of one portion of the holy

[g] John xvii, 17. [h] 2 Cor. vii, 1. [i] Prov. ii, 4.
[k] Rom. iv, 20. [l] 2 Thess. ii, 8. Cor. vi, 10.
[m] Rev. i, 3.

Volume in particular; but doubtless it may be said with equal propriety of every other. And herein you observe an union betwixt *hearing*, *reading*, and *keeping* the sayings of God's Book. If you hear without reading, or hear and read without keeping them, you will hear and read in vain and to little purpose. It is when our Word fails of any practical effect—fails to induce your search of the Scriptures—fails to further within you the joy of faith, the patience of hope, and the labour of love, that our "strength is spent for nought and in vain." Our desire and prayer for you therefore, is that you may receive the Word with all readiness of mind; search the Scriptures daily whether the things you hear be accordant to them, and assure us of your cordial reception of the Truth by "walking before the Lord in all pleasing."

Having considered the three things we proposed, viz. The disposition of mind with which the Bereans received the Word: the conduct which it led them to pursue; and the effect which their pursuit produced--there is only one closing OBSERVATION that I beg to make:

See wherein true nobility consists. The Bereans were "*more noble* than those of Thessalonica:" and wherefore? Because they heard, received, and searched the Word of God and became humble believers and professors of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, religion by many persons is thought to be well enough for poor people, common people, illiterate people; just as if religion did not become people of birth, fortune, and education. So far, however, is religion from being a mark of a low and vulgar mind, the wonder is how any one possessing plain common sense, can choose to be otherwise than religious. It is faith in the Bible and an experimental acquaintance with its truths, that allies us to "the mighty God," ennobles and refines the soul's capacities, and fits it for an eternity of glory. It is quite erroneous to suppose that

circumstances of a mere adventitious kind—wealth, honour, influence, and the like,—constitute true nobility. There is a *nobleness of soul,* which nothing of an earthly kind can possibly bestow. We must be "*born of the Spirit;*" we must possess that "*wisdom whose fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold, and whose revenue than choice silver:*" we must "*seek the honour which cometh of God only;*" we must "*deny ourselves*" and "*bring our body into subjection,*" to be truly great and noble. It is a remark we sometimes hear, 'Your communicants are for the most part the poorer classes and your hearers the lower orders.' Be it so! and if this be a by-word of reproach, let their wealthier neighbours partake of our Communion and silence it. And admitting our hearers to be, generally, 'the lower orders,' be it so! the "common people," we are told, heard our Lord and Master gladly, and "to the poor," as being a privilege of a peculiarly gracious kind, "the Gospel is preached." And by whom the Gospel is most readily *received* too, Paul tells you in 1 Cor. i, 26. Soon will every human distinction vanish. "The fashion of this world passeth away." Where, eventually, will be our superiority to others? No superiority will remain but what the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ confers. The names of all his people shall be found—though not, it may be, blazoned in the annals of this world, yet—"written in the Book of Life." No deeds of valour, no splendid exploits, may have been wrought by them, nor ever been reported with their names around the listening earth; but to have subdued the kingdom of darkness; to have conquered self; to have wrought righteousness; to have fought the good fight of faith, and to have walked humbly with their God, will make their memorial blessed for ever, and be to them honour and renown when Earth's most illustrious trophies and most gorgeous distinctions shall be lost in forgetfulness and ruin. A poor but pious follower of the Lamb may live unnoticed and die unregretted; no assiduous

friends may watch around his couch; no human being mark the ebbing of his life away, nor sculptured stone point out his body's resting place: but, celestial spirits invisibly watch over him, and his Lord will not forget to raise *him* up at the last day. Learned he might not be: but if he received the Word with readiness; if he searched the Scriptures, and through faith in Christ Jesus, became wise unto salvation; all inferior to his wisdom will be the knowledge which mere worldly science can impart. Then, my poorer Brethren, be contented with your lot. If ye be willing to receive the Truth, and will be careful to adorn it, yours will be the noblest Father, the noblest patrimony, the noblest estate, and the noblest name. Jesus, your Lord, when he became Immanuel, "became poor." He, too, was "despised and rejected of men." Great, however, good, and holy was he in his lowest and most degraded condition: and now the sorrows and griefs of his humiliation are passed away, he reigns "the Prince of the Kings of the Earth:" "All power in Heaven and in Earth is his:" "Riches unsearchable,"—honours and rewards eternal, has he to bestow: To you is "the Word of his salvation sent:" Receive it only, and it shall ennoble you for ever, and with the glories of your Redeemer's kingdom in your view, you will not, I am sure, be slow to say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

"*Brethren; the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your Spirit.* AMEN."

DISCOURSE XXVII.

PUBLIC WORSHIP: HOW USUALLY ATTENDED.

GENESIS xxviii, 16, 17.

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven.

THERE is a something so awfully grand, so mysteriously sublime, in the essential existence, the exalted nature, the moral character, and the infinitely glorious attributes of God; that, in every place, where it pleaseth him to put his Name and to manifest his presence, a solemn dread must fill the soul of every really devout and enlightened worshipper. "How dreadful is this place!" exclaimed the patriarch Jacob, when a sense of the Divine presence and majesty came upon him.

Jacob had recently quitted his father, Isaac's, dwelling-place: He was journeying now to Haran: As he journeyed, he lighted, we are informed, on a certain place and tarried there all night, because the sun was set. Jacob made the ground his couch and a stone his pillow. In dreams and visions of the night, he seemed to see a ladder set upon the earth, the top of which reached to heaven. Thereon the angels of God, as ministering and guardian spirits, were ascending and

descending, whilst above and beyond them stood the Lord. And the Lord said unto Jacob, "I am the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west and to the east, and to the north and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee, in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again to this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."—"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep," awed, we may easily conceive, by a sense of the grandeur, the sovereignty, the benignity, of the eternal God; and he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." And from a perception, doubtless, of the Lord's glory and a recollection of his own unworthiness, "Jacob was afraid, and he said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven." In grateful memorial of the Divine goodness and the mercies so graciously promised to himself and seed, the Patriarch "rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el," that is, *The House of God.*

Now, my Beloved Brethren, the presence of God is not confined to the place where Jacob lay, nor is the pillar which Jacob consecrated the only memorial of the Lord's majesty and mercy. "The Lord is in *this* place; *this* is none other but the House of God, and *this* is the Gate of Heaven." True; you will perhaps say: God is in every place: and therefore God is here. Allowedly, God is in every place: "the heavens are his throne, and the earth is his footstool;" and "Where," he himself inquires, "Where is the House that ye build me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath my hand made, and all those

things have been, saith the Lord."[a] Can Immensity be circumscribed? Can One that is above all and in all and through all, dwell in houses made with hands? No; surely not: Nevertheless, God is peculiarly and especially present with some persons in some places. In Eden, while it remained a Garden of innocence and pleasure, "the Lord God walked," and most probably in a form visible and apparent to the senses of our first Parents. With Abraham, in the plains of Mamre, "the Lord talked as a man talketh to his friend:" and on one occasion we are expressly told, "*the Lord went up* when he had left communing with Abraham;"[b] and wherefore should this be stated if the Lord went not *visibly* up into the heavens of his glory? He dwelt visibly also amongst the Israelites, first in the Tabernacle of Moses, and afterwards in the more sumptuous and magnificent Temple of Solomon. He was once personally present among men in the Man Christ Jesus, and still is he spiritually the same wherever, over all the earth, "two or three are gathered together in his Name." The Lord has his Day, his House, his Word, his Ministers. "As a Spirit"—wonderful in counsel; fearful in praises; glorious in holiness; and dreadful in power—he requires to be "worshipped in spirit and in truth," by all that professedly supplicate around his throne. His throne is indeed "a throne of grace:" the blood of atonement precedes our approaches to it; but yet He that sits thereon will be served "with reverence and godly fear," and "I will be sanctified," he says, "in them that come nigh me."[c] But, *is* he? *Is* this the mode of worship which obtains among the millions who 'call and profess themselves Christians?' *Do* they come to the House of God with a holy dread upon their minds? *Do* they enter the Gate of Heaven awed by the presence of the Lord within it? *Can* they truly say, The Lord is in this place and we know it?

[a] Isaiah lxvi, 1, 2. [b] Gen. xvii, 22. [c] Lev. x, 3.

That you may not deem our interrogations needless or our judgment of our fellow-sinners uncharitable, I will appeal to yourselves, and in the prosecution of our subject, I will ask you these two questions: First, *How do people usually come to the House of God?* and Secondly, *How ought they to come?*

First, I ask you, *How do people usually come to the House of God?*

We should suppose that when the hour of Prayer arrives—when the bell, tolling its appointed summons, tells us that the House of God is opened and the Gate of Heaven unfolded, we should all, with the utmost care, prepare to meet our God, and to "come up to his holy hill and to his dwelling." We should suppose that one and all of us would be saying—"I am coming before the holy Lord God: I am about to approach the footstool of the King immortal: His eye will discern my most latent purposes: iniquity is an abhorrence to him: He will not be mocked with impunity: My prayers must be expressive of my feelings, my praises of my gratitude. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Who shall mediate between us? and what Days-man shall lay his hand upon us both, as partaking at once of the Divine and Human natures? What atoning blood shall bespeak me favour, and sprinkle my heart from an evil conscience? What odorous incense shall mingle with my worship, and procure it acceptance in the holiest of all? Who shall help my infirmities? What are the wants of my soul? Is it my soul's determined purpose not to let the Angel of the eternal Covenant depart until he bless me? Will this earthly Palace of my God lead me in desire and expectation forward to the Jerusalem that is above—the House which human hands made not, and where sits Jehovah throned in awful grandeur and in dazzling holiness? Feel I a wish, a warm and fervent wish, to ascend by Jesus Christ into the heavens; to pass the celestial

portals, and to bow with adoring reverence before the throne as one among the hosts of the redeemed? Were it now said to me, "Come up hither," am I ready? Is my soul arrayed in the garment of Salvation, and prepared in recollectedness and love to sing the hymn of, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ?"—With consideration and care similar somewhat to this should we doubtless obey a summons to some noble or princely dwelling-place: but, do we come to "the courts of the house of our God" with any thing like this considerate carefulness? O Beloved, I would we did. But, if people do not come thus, how do they come? Appealing, remember, to yourselves, I ask, do they not come *thoughtlessly, prayerlessly, faithlessly?*

Do they not come *thoughtlessly?* Sobriety of mind and gravity of deportment are repeatedly enjoined in Scripture.[d] These ought at all times to mark the Christian character: How much more should they do so when we come to the House of God, and into the more immediate presence of the Lord of hosts. But, alas! may we not fear that few, very few, when they attend the public services of the Church have any sober and becoming thoughts of the great and glorious object of all religious homage and adoration? Do they bring before the Lord the one only availing Sacrifice for sin? Do they think through whose merits and mediation alone, they can be favourably regarded and mercifully accepted?—A Jew presumed not to appear before God without a sacrifice: how many a Christian, so called, presumes to come before Him without aught like a believing regard to Christ, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." People consider not that God can be gracious only in his Son. Usually, too, they will be found ignorant of their spiritual necessities: and though they say, 'O come, let us worship and fall down and kneel before the Lord,

[d] Titus ii, 2—6.

our Maker;" yet they do not fall down before Him; they are too lofty in their imaginations to *kneel at all* in his presence, and their worship is such that God may well ask, "Who hath required this at your hands?" and say to such worshippers, "Bring no more vain oblations."[e] The ear may listen to another's voice, and the lips may repeat the language of another's prayer, but where is the heart? Where is that thoughtful recollectedness without which all our devotion is pretence and mockery? Thoughtlessness may be seen depicted in the every look and movement of the majority of our Congregation. Most truly may many a one say, when the services of our Church are over, "The Lord was in this place, and I knew it not." And whence arises this painful circumstance? People do not recollect themselves. From worldly concerns or family cares, they rush at once into the House of God. No solemn pause precedes their entry into the Gate of Heaven. "Very greatly to be feared," is Jehovah: but no fear of his dread majesty rests upon their souls. "To be had in reverence of all that are round about Him," is the Lord Almighty: but how often does a wandering eye, a listless apathy, a vacant stare, and even a composure of all the powers to sleep, betray a mind void, totally void, of reverence and godly fear!—Brethren; "examine yourselves:" See whether ye be clear in this matter: See whether you yourselves are so thoughtful, so serious, so devout in heart and spirit, as ye should be when you come to the House of God and to the Gate of Heaven.

But, I ask, moreover, Do not people usually come *prayerlessly?* We say not that all could come from kneeling in their closets to kneel again in Church: but, may we not fear, many do not who could? Were we expectantly going to the Court of some human Potentate either to render homage or to supplicate favour, how many inquiries, how much anxiety, what

[e] Isaiah i, 12, 13.

studious recollection of our errand, would doubtless pass within us! But where are the the inquiries, where is the anxiety, where the studious recollection of the many before they enter the house of God and approach the throne of grace? Alas! their hearts are prayerless. Their souls go not forth to God in fervency of desire: they pray not for his Spirit's outpouring; for the lightening down of his Almighty arm in our midst; for the prevalence and success of the glorious Gospel; for the humiliation of the proud and the consolation of the humble; for the detection of error and the reception of truth; for the destruction of every idol-god, and the exclusive exaltation of "the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." "For these things will I be inquired of saith the Lord, to do them for you."[e] People inquire not for them, and therefore they are not done. And as no prayer precedes their visit to the House of God, so no prayer passes with them through its gate or marks the resumption of their wonted sittings in it. What a pretence to devotion is the momentary covering of the face by many with the hat or hand! How all-unlike is it to the veiling of the cherubic faces in the Temple where sits the Lord of Hosts upon a Throne high and lifted up![f] Does this act, in the generality of our worshippers, indicate the engagement of the soul in communion with its God? Instead of prayer for the Divine presence, assistance, and blessing; ought not many a one to be praying on his entry into the House of God, for the pardon of his late, hurried, and heedless attendance there? Can we wonder that the minds of many are distracted by vain and worldly thoughts during the solemnities of worship? Is it surprising that the Sabbath is a weariness to many, and their souls remain all-unblessed and unrefreshed by all its means and mercies? Here again, my Brethren, examine yourselves. Ye are now gathered within the walls of

[e] Ezek. xxxvi, 37. [f] Isaiah vi, 2.

your Fane: Did you ere you came hither pray to the God whose House you fill? Came ye hither prayerfully? Looked ye to your feet, and were ye more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools?[g] Walked ye as friends to the House of God, taking sweet counsel together:[h] *Feel* you the Lord to be in this place? *Know* ye him to be so? And is it in your heart to say with Jacob, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven!" Inquire and see whether it be with prayer and supplication *ye* come before the Lord.

But I have further to ask, Do not people usually come *faithlessly?* Of some we read, "The word preached did not profit them, *not being mixed with faith* in them that heard it:"[i] and of the Israelites when they were come to the very borders of the promised Land, we are told, "they could not enter in *because of unbelief.*"[k] And why does not the word preached profit more that hear it now? For precisely the same reason—"not being mixed with faith in them that hear it." And why, when so many come to these earthly Sanctuaries of our God, do they not enter his celestial Courts and worship in "the holiest of all?"—"because of unbelief." It is proved to many, as evidently almost as light is distinguishable from darkness, that they are WRONG—that if they live and die in their present unchanged state, they must inevitably perish—that whoever may be the children of God, they are not—that whoever may know and value the true medium of communication between Heaven and earth, they do not; and yet, notwithstanding all their knowledge and conviction, they continue, through their faithlessness, unhumbled still. Sometimes, it may be, they feel somewhat of the power of the Truth, and for a season are apprehensive of

[g] Eccl. v, 1. [h] Ps. 55. 14. [i] Heb. iv, 2.
[k] Ibid iii, 19.

wrath and danger! but it is only for a season, just as when the faithless among the armies of Israel saw the earth open and swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, they trembled and were afraid; and on the morning of the very next day, became as faithless and careless as before.[l] If the word of God be really believed, the belief of it will be influential on the heart and conduct. If, too, prayer be really sincere, the petitioner will not be contented without an answer to his prayer. Do not indifference about the recollection of the Word and unconcern about the acceptance and vouchsafement of prayer, argue a lamentable faithlessness of heart? Can we assure ourselves that the generality of hearers hear with the readiness of the noble-minded Bereans to receive what they hear? Is it possible for us to find it in those who can nod and bow and converse and sleep in the very House of God, and while God's sovereign and eternal Majesty is being invoked, worshipped, and adored? Judge ye. "Examine your own selves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves."[m] Have ye faith in God? Is your confidence chastened with humility? Is your faith maintained in vigorous and lively exercise when you come to appear before the Lord in Zion? Come ye prepared to hear—"not the word of man but the word of God?" Do its great truths fill you with solemn dread? Do ye "tremble" at them?[n] Do they really profit you, and, mingled with faith in your heart, do they nourish your spiritual being, and wing your soul with fervour and desire to behold the glory of God in the new and everlasting habitations of the heavenly world? Inquire, and "be not faithless, but believing."

I think, then, you will admit that people usually do come thoughtlessly, prayerlessly, and faithlessly, to the House of God. And though all are certainly not alike thoughtless, prayerless, and faithless, yet all

[l] Num. xvi, 31—41. [m] 2 Cor. xiii, 5. [n] Isaiah lxvi, 2.

would do well to inquire how far in these things they fall short, and how much nearer they might approach the spirit of good old Jacob's words—"How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the House of God and this is the Gate of Heaven."

Having asked you How people usually do come to the House of God, I come to ask you

SECONDLY, *How ought they to come?*

And how? In a way directly the reverse of that in which they do come. Ought they not to come with *thought*, with *prayer*, with *faith*?

And (1.) With *thought*? "How long, says God, shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"[o] Such is the infirmity and weakness of our nature that "vain thoughts" will ever and anon be springing up within us: but the Lord would not that we should harbour them—would not that they should find a *lodgement* in our heart. And if at no time they should find a lodgement there, much less should they when we join in the public services of our Faith, and come before the presence of God. On an occasion so interesting and so solemn, ought our mind to be "as water spilt upon the ground that cannot be gathered up?" Ought it not rather to be held in thoughtful recollectedness? Should not people say when coming before the Lord, 'Tarry O world, tarry our families, tarry every earthly thing and care—tarry here, while I go yonder and worship.'[p] Should not ourselves; our wants; our already accumulated obligations to Divine favour; and our entire dependence on the freeness, the fulness, the perpetuity, of that favour, be considered? Should not the grandeur, the holiness, the faithfulness of God; the person, the work, the death, the intercession, of Jesus Christ; and the gracious condescension, the forbearing kindness, and unfailing love of the Spirit—

[o] Jer. iv, 14. [p] Gen. xxii, 5.

all, by turn, engage our thoughts when we come to this holy place? Distressing, truly, is the thoughtlessness of the many. If ye see it to be so, take care that ye come hither as ye ought. I have an answer to my question, 'How ought people to attend the House of God?' in your own conscience: take good heed then to yourselves and come with *thought*.

But (2.) Should not people come with *prayer*. "My house, says God, shall be called an House of Prayer."[q] It is where two or three are gathered together in his name, that he promises his especial presence: and again he says unto us, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them."[r] Then ought we not to assemble ourselves before the Lord prayerfully? Alas! we fear too many of our congregations do not know what prayer is. May not a person *say* prayers, and that for many years of his life, and yet not *pray* all the while?[s] Is not the religion of many mere "bodily exercise?" May there not be an attendance on Means and a devout posture of body in their use, and yet the heart at the same time remain cold, unaffected, averse to God, and unconscious, totally unconscious, of grateful communion with him? We find Prayer denominated in Scripture, "crying," "calling," "pleading," "wrestling," "groaning;" all which terms imply fervour of desire, almost unutterable request, and, real importunity of soul with God. Jacob wrestling with the Angel—(the Angel, doubtless, of the everlasting Covenant; that is, the Lord Jesus Christ)—on his return from Haran;[t] Nehemiah before the king Artaxerxes;[v] Peter when fearfully sinking in the waters of Tiberias;[w] the Publican when abased and humbled, he cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner;"[x] the Thief when amid the agonies of death, he cried, "Lord remember me;"[y] are all illus-

[q] Isa. lvi, 7. [r] Matt. xviii, 19. [s] Mark xii, 40.
[t] Gen. xxxii, 24—32. [v] Chap. ii, 4. [w] Matt. xiv, 30.
[x] Luke xviii, 13. [y] Luke xxiii, 42.

trative examples of "effectual fervent prayer." Then, "after this manner pray ye." If the House of God be the House of prayer, ought ye not to come within its gates prayerfully disposed? When it is said, "Ask and ye shall receive;" ought we not to ask a vouchsafement of the Divine presence? ought we not to ask "an unction from the Holy One" wherewith empowered the Word may prove an arrow of conviction unto some, and a message of consolation unto others?—"I beseech thee, said Moses, shew me thy glory:" And God shewed him His "goodness" plenteously.[z] "O God," said David, "thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the Sanctuary;"[a] and whilst he thus "panted after God as the hart after the water brook," and meditated thus prayerfully upon Him, David's soul was "satisfied as with marrow and fatness." Know ye what this meaneth? See ye that in like manner ought our souls to thirst after God? Then come before him with prayer—prayer for the manifestation of his glory to your souls in the face of Jesus Christ:[b] prayer for the ingathering of his Church: prayer that the "Hosanna" of our children may increasingly abound, and the "Halleluia" of their fathers be ceaselessly repeated. If ye see and admit that in the Spirit of prayer people ought to come to the house of God, take care that you yourselves come prayerfully. Be prepared to add a sincere amen to the many rich and comprehensive prayers of your Church: so shall the sure mercies of the Lord enrich, refresh, and bless you. Pardon; peace; help; comfort; victory; triumph; glory; yea, "WHATSOEVER *ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*"

And lastly, ought not people to come with *faith* to the Mercy-seat? "Without faith it is impossible to

[z] Exod. xxxiii, 18. [a] Ps. 63. 1, 2. [b] 2 Cor. iv, 6.

please God: for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is—that he *exists*, in order to come to him; and that God is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him, *in order to encourage his coming to him.*[c] It is as faith is in lively and vigorous exercise that God is apprehended and felt to be really present. It is by faith we embrace the proffered mercies of salvation. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is received by faith. His righteousness is "the righteousness of faith:" by faith we therewith clothe our souls, as we attire our bodies in their usual habiliments with our hand. And it is when we ask in prayer for things, *believing that we have them*, that we receive them.[d] Unless, therefore, people attend their Church with faith, their prayers will be formal and listless; their expectations few; their desires low and grovelling; and the Word they hear will profit them little or nothing. By faith we walk and by faith we live. Ought not, then, persons to attend the public worship of Almighty God under a realizing sense of spiritual and eternal things? Ought they not, at least, to *endeavour* to do so? Ought not the believer's prevailing wish to be breathed in the holy Psalmist's language—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple?"[e] Ought these things so to be? Allow ye their propriety? *Know* ye these things? Then, "happy are ye if ye *do* them!" And may ye be found to be "of those who *believe* to the saving of the soul!" With thought, prayer, and faith, ought people to come to the House of God. And now I have asked you how usually they *do* come and how they *ought* to come, I cannot close without suggesting one or two obvious REMARKS:—

[c] Heb. xi, 6. [d] Mark xi, 24. [e] Ps. 27. 4.

And (1.) *See the true reason why many profit so little from their Means of grace.* Many express surprise that they cannot attend their Means with more profit than they do; their minds wander: their memories are bad: they cannot retain what they hear; and so on. But, we apprehend, their surprise would cease, in some good measure, if they would only consider the manner in which they attend their Means. Where is their thoughtfulness?—their prayerfulness?—their faithfulness? What sense have they of the Lord's presence and glory? Where is their dread, their reverential dread, of a just and holy God? Where is the ardour of their desire to "see Jesus?"—where the simplicity of their faith in Him? Alas! where? "The Lord is in this place, and they know it not." "This is the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven;" but they feel not "how dreadful is this place." No previous private prayer prepared the heart for social worship. Their spirit made no diligent search, and hence the soul's necessities are not known. Worldliness was dominant, and now eternal realities recede from view. The hour or two of public duty passes away, and such characters as we have supposed, go from the courts of the Lord, unsatisfied, unrefreshed, unblessed. Is it not so, Brethren? Is there no one amongst you whose experience corroborates what I say? Then see the *true* reason why so many profit so little from their Means of grace. Let me not, however, leave you discouraged: I would remark

(2.) *How abundantly you might profit by a more thoughtful, prayerful, and faithful use of your Means.* Only "stir up the gift that is in you," and exercise yourselves in thought, in prayer, and faith, and your "profiting shall appear unto all." The Spirit's unction will "teach you of all things." You shall feed on the plenteousness of your Father's House, and "drink of his pleasures as of a river" of unfailing and satisfying goodness. Herewith you may "prove" the

Lord, and see "if He will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."[f] "*All*" that you may ask; "*above* all;" "*abundantly* above all;" yea, "*exceeding* abundantly above all that you can either ask or think," will the Lord do for his praying believing servants.[g] With all "spiritual blessings" hath he blessed us in Christ Jesus: "Ask and receive that your joy may be full." Love your "Beth-el." Remember God is here. Hither come and be ever continually rearing another and a still more grateful "Ebenezer" in memorial of the abounding mercies both vouchsafed and promised to you. If "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion," do you also love them: If he loves them "*more* than all the dwellings of Judah," do you love them rather than any thing and place beside.—If the Lord is for his majesty and holiness—"very greatly to be feared;" O do you pause ere you approach his footstool, and be solicitous, earnestly solicitous, to worship him "in spirit and in truth." Forget not the only Mediator. Jesus is the ladder Jacob saw: no man cometh to the Father but by him: no man can pass the gate of the new Jerusalem but by him: On him think: In the name of Jesus pray: On him in your heart believe. By him it is our God "hath sent redemption unto his people:" in him "God hath commanded his covenant for ever: Holy and reverend, therefore, is his name."[h]—May ye hallow and revere his name; reverence his sanctuary; come henceforward thoughtfully, prayerfully, faithfully before him; be abundantly blessed in the use of all your Means, and eventually be made "pillars in the temple of your God," to go out again no more for ever!

[f] Mal. iii, 10. [g] Eph. iii, 20. [h] Ps. 111. 9.

DISCOURSE XXVIII.

FAMILY WORSHIP.*

Genesis xviii, 19.

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Do you, my Brethren, read the Word of God and pray in your families? I repeat the question; *Do you read the Word of God and pray in your families?* Though not, allowedly, specified with particularity in the sacred Scriptures, Family Worship is, nevertheless, universally acknowledged and implied in them. Honourable, truly, is the testimony which the Searcher of hearts bears to the character and conduct of his servant Abraham. Worthily is he called, "The father of the faithful," and "the friend of God." Justified himself by faith: blessed with a sweet consciousness of the Divine favour, and happy in the right ways of the Lord, Abraham was solicitous that the spiritual good which he enjoyed should be shared by his household, and be perpetuated among his children from one

* See Chapter vii. of 'A Treatise on Prayer,' by the Rev. Edward Bickersteth. To this the Author acknowledges himself much indebted for several particulars mentioned in this Discourse.

generation to another, and assure to them the promises of God when his grey hairs should have been brought down with gladness to the grave. He therefore "commanded his children and his household after him." And since "they that are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham,"[a] it behoves me to exhort you, "if ye be Abraham's seed, that ye do the works of Abraham."[b] That you may, then, command *your* children and *your* households after you, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, and that the Lord may bring upon *you* that which he hath promised—let me be favoured with your attention, while I endeavour simply to shew you

I. The obligation we are under to maintain Family Worship:
II. The advantages derivable from so doing:
And III. The excuses made for neglecting it.

I would shew you

I. *The* OBLIGATION *we are under to maintain Family Worship*—

And here we first of all observe that Family Worship is a thing *reasonable in itself.* Shall the father of a human family be respected in his person, acknowledged in his authority, and loved for his paternal kindness; and shall the one common Father of all, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of our spirits, and the God of all our mercies, be unrespected, unacknowledged, unloved? Is it reasonable that we avow our gratitude for mercies of a national and a personal kind, and not for those of a social or a family kind? Shall monuments be reared to our earthly fathers, friends, and deliverers; and shall we forbear to rear an altar to our God and Saviour? As "our reasonable service," I think we are obligated for a family's mercies, to offer up a family's worship.

[a] Gal. iii, 7. [b] John viii, 39.

But this argument for the obligation we are under to maintain Family Worship, receives additional strength when we consider that there is not, it is believed, a people upon earth, however uncivilized, rude, and ignorant, who do not acknowledge some Being superior in power, authority, and influence to themselves, and on whom they are dependent. How universally prevalent are sacrifices, and how common, too, among the heathen are household deities. Surely, then, with our purer faith, our more enlightened views, and greater civilization, it ill becomes us to neglect the worship of Almighty God in our families. With our multiplied privileges, I conceive we are proportionally obligated to acknowledge their bounteous and merciful bestower.

Moreover, Family Worship comes recommended to us by many *scriptural Examples*. Joshua's well known determination was—"As for me *and my house*, we will serve the Lord."[c] David, when he brought the Ark of the Covenant from the house of Obed-edom, and set it in the midst of the tent which he had pitched for it, "returned to *bless his house*."[d] Job, fearing lest his sons in the unchecked gaiety of their hearts, should blaspheme the Lord, "rose up early in the morning and offered sacrifices for them all," and "*thus did Job continually*."[e] Cornelius was "a devout man—one that feared God *with all his house*, and prayed to God alway."[f] We read of the Saviour's praying *with* his disciples as well as for them,[g] and often did he privately instruct them. We read, too, of "*the Church that is in Nymphas' house*" and of "*the Church in Philemon's house*;" to the one of which Paul sends a friendly salutation, and to the other wishes "grace and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ,"[h] Now these Churches were none other than "congregations of faithful men'—*house-*

[c] Ch xxiv, 15. [d] I Chron. xvi, 43. [e] Ch. i, 5.
[f] Acts x, 2. [g] Luke ix, 18. [h] Col. iv, 15.

holds, in which the worship of God was maintained. And if we are to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," and above all, of our Lord and Saviour, I think we cannot but feel under a solemn and positive obligation to worship God in our domestic circle.

But, let us more particularly contemplate the patriarch Abraham's commanding his children and his household after him. His family piety obtains the approval and commendation of Jehovah himself—a commendation that most clearly indicates the mind of God concerning Family Worship. We see the finger of the eternal Father pointing us to this illustrious example of domestic piety; and whoso hath ears to hear may hear him saying "Go and do ye likewise." Wherever Abraham's earthly dwelling place was fixed there he built an altar to the Lord. This he did in the plains of Mamre: this he did again when he removed to a mountain on the east of Bethel.[i] Daily, doubtless, did he instruct his children in the altar's mystic rites, and point his household to THE LAMB which he knew the Lord would in after ages provide himself for a burnt-offering.[k] The advent of Jesus Christ was indeed to Abraham "as a morning spread upon the mountains," mixed as yet with gloom and only dawning; but "he saw it and was glad."[l] "The way of the Lord" was to pass by transgression; to forgive freely and to save gratuitously: and all with reference to a SEED that should be born to Abraham and a Covenant of peace made with him. Savingly acquainted with this great Truth was Abraham; and "justice and judgment" were the necessary fruits of his faith. Hence, He to whom all hearts are open and the most secret springs of action are discernable, testified of his servant—"I know him, that he *will* command his children and his household after him:" and thus commanded, "they," as their great Progenitor

[i] Gen. xii. 7, 8. [k] Gen. xxii. 8. [l] John viii. 56.

had done, "*shall* keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment," saith the Lord. Prayer and instruction in Abraham's family went hand in hand together. Most significantly were they owned and blessed; and now is this example of domestic piety before us, stamped with the approving sanction of Almighty God. Are we, then, under no obligation to maintain it? How can we possibly be "the children of faithful Abraham," if we walk not in our Father's footsteps? Abraham's faith will lead to Abraham's practice: and vain will be all our pretences to piety if there be not an harmonious union betwixt our belief and conduct. It is "with ALL prayer,"—that is, with *all manner* of prayer; *domestic* as well as public and private—believers are exhorted to "pray alway."[m] "Prayer" is to be made for the glory and universal triumph of our Saviour-God "*continually*," and "*daily* (it is prophetically declared) shall he be praised."[n] If "all the families of the Earth are *to be* blessed in him;" surely all those families of the Earth that *are* already blessed in him, should deem it their honour and their privilege to serve and worship him. If *day by day*, we are taught to ask our daily bread; surely it is implied that day by day we are under ever continually increasing obligation to adore and thank the Faithful Donor of it. If man be born rude and untractable as "a wild ass's colt:"[o] if "foolishness be bound up in the heart of a child,"[p] and "as soon as we are born, we go astray and speak lies;"[q] why, then it becomes the imperative duty of the Masters, the Parents, and the Elders of our families to instruct their children and dependents in "the way of the Lord" and the truths of the Lord's revealed will. And indeed unless *they* will care for the moral and religious welfare of their households, no others can care effectually for them.

[m] Eph. vi. 18. [n] Ps. 72. 15. [o] Job. xi. 12.
[p] Prov. xxii. 15. [q] Ps. 58. 3.

A fearful responsibility attaches to parental and magisterial authority. Used with prudence, it becomes a mighty means of good: neglected or abused, a fearful consequence awaits it. The souls of children and servants are committed to our care: In "the nurture and admonition of the Lord" are they required to be brought up: this it is scarcely possible to do without regular and constant daily devotions in the family. As I have said before, so say I now again, every man should be the priest of his own household: every household should know its fixed and determined seasons for the gathering of its members around the altar of God; and every member of every household should be instructed in the nature, use, efficacy, and value of Christ's atoning sacrifice, and taught that "without shedding of blood there is no remission" of sin; and unless, as Abraham was, we be "justified by faith," we shall never be justified with God at all. O Beloved, let these things sink down into your ears. Be it remembered that we have all a Master in Heaven—a Master to whom we must all one day account for our several and respective talents; and awful is that saying we find written in Jeremiah x. and 25, "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and *upon the families that call not upon thy Name.*" Methinks this Scripture, added to our foregoing remarks, obliges us, in a manner the most solemn and impressive, to maintain the Worship of God in our houses. "The families that call not upon God's Name," are herein ranked with "the heathen that know him not:" and upon them equally will the Almighty "pour out"—*pour* out, as a ruinous and desolating torrent, his just and holy anger. *Equally*, did I say? Nay; shall it not be *more tolerable* for the heathen and their families in the Day of Judgment, than for many who live like heathens in a Christian land?[r] Let us, then, consider this: and hencefor-

[r] Mat. x. 15. Luke x. 14.

ward be "thanksgiving and the voice of melody," reading of the Word and prayer, heard and observed in all our habitations.

I hope you will be still further encouraged to adopt the plain and obvious duty of Family Worship, while I shew you

II. *The* ADVANTAGES *derivable from so doing*—

These are, I believe, incalculably great. It would far exceed the time usually allotted to our public ministration of the Word very particularly to enumerate them or to dilate upon them. We must, therefore, briefly, notice those of a most striking and important kind.

The continuance and prevalence of piety, is, in some measure, assured by Family Worship. Instruction given to the younger and dependent members of a family, in a kind, familiar and condescending way, is seldom, perhaps never, given wholly in vain. In several successive generations, we see the beneficial effects of Abraham's commanding his children and his household after him. See in Genesis xxiv. how beautifully the fear and love of God shone forth in the character of his elder servant. Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, were all men of God: they kept "the way of the Lord and did justice and judgment." Failures and infirmities, indeed, marked their conduct:—(and when or where is human nature otherwise than sinful and depraved?)—but they were men of probity and truth. Now, would we that our children and others over whom we have influence, should keep the way of the Lord, and carry onward to succeeding years and generations the knowledge and the love of God? Let us use the *means* and we may reasonably expect the *end*. Most certainly, it is not with us to convert the souls of those committed to our charge; but, we may "teach them the good and the right way:" we may tell them they are sinners, and as such, exposed to wrath while unforgiven: we may tell them Who is

the Friend and Saviour of sinners; how they may be reconciled to God; how become "new creatures;" how "fulfil all righteousness;" be holy in desire and purpose here, and altogether so hereafter. This it is in our power to do: Obligated we are to do it; and with prayer for the Divine approval of our labours and blessing on them, we may hope our families will perpetuate the knowledge of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, when our heart hath ceased to beat and our tongue to speak. On the contrary, how can we reasonably expect our successors on the stage of human conduct to tread the paths of holiness and truth, when their fathers before them trod the ways of worldliness and error? Will they, can we hope, live *with* God and with him walk in near and sweet communion, if we live *without* him and refuse him the homage of our heart? Surely not: if then we would that piety should continue and prevail, let us command whom we may to worship with us the God in whom we live and move, and on whom we are dependent for our life and breath and all things.

Family Worship, too, when prudently conducted is attended with this advantage, *It tends to promote unity and peace.* A joyous and pleasant thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity:[s] and what, under God's approving smile, will tend more effectually to produce and to preserve this unity as the regular observance of domestic worship? Why is it, we may be allowed to ask, *Why is it* so many are continually troubled with the misconduct and perverseness of children and dependents? Why! because the blessing of the Lord rests not in its softening, hallowing, uniting, influence on their households; and that blessing they have not because they ask it not. Can peace be found where the Son of peace dwells not?[t] Can light and love and harmony prevail where the source and spring of all heavenly affections is unheeded and unknown?

[s] Ps. 133. 1. [t] Luke x. 6.

Can we be "one" otherwise than as united in Christ Jesus? "Where envying and strife is,"—and envying and strife will commonly be found where Christ is not—"there is confusion and every evil work."[v] Whereas; let the holy Scriptures be daily read, and God be worshipped in a simple, humble, Christian manner, and this will *allay*, at least, if not entirely remove, those unhappy passions to which our common nature is liable, and which, more or less, are too apparent in every family. 'I am to join in Family Worship by and bye,' is a reflection which has not infrequently confined an unkindly feeling to the breast, prevented the utterance of a threatening word, smoothed the brow of anger, and added subsequent fervour to thanksgiving for deliverance from it. Where can family sins be better confessed and lamented than at a family altar? Where can family sorrows be brought with more propriety before "the God of all comfort" than in a family circle? And where, in all the world, will you find that sweet union of heart—that oneness of pursuit, aim, and enjoyment—that prevailing desire of the *each* to promote the happiness of the *whole*, unless it be in "an household of faith," an household regulated by Christian rule and devoted to the service of the Lord?

Another great advantage resulting almost necessarily from the practice of Family Worship is—*The preservation of a sense of divine and spiritual things*. We are all by nature disposed to evil and indisposed to good. Children, in general, are very thoughtless and inconsiderate. Servants, too, and domestics, though commonly apt enough to acquire a knowledge of the occupations and duties pertaining to their respective callings, will yet be found slow and dull in the apprehension of religious truths and things of an intellectual kind: But the regular return of Family Worship says—(silently, indeed; but not on that account the less effectually)—'There is a God: There is a Being in our midst, invisible, truly, to our bodily organs, but

[v] James iii. 16

spiritually present, and privy to all our thoughts and purposes: On this Being are we all dependent: Our duty it is to worship him: Accountable are we to him for all we think, or say, or do: a world of retribution awaits our departure hence: notwithstanding, therefore the irreligion and ungodliness of the many, there must yet be a tremendous reality in all that concerns the soul and the soul's salvation.' This "small still voice" it will be impossible for the most ignorant and careless members of our household not occasionally to hear. And when it is heard, incalculable good may result from it. Our worship may seem to be unheeded at the time; but seeds of truth and knowledge may be sown that shall in after years spring up and bear the fruits of righteousness. 'My father,' or 'My master used to read and pray in the family where I lived and when I was young,' has more than once been a sufficient stimulus to a child or to a servant to do the same.*

But a further advantage derivable from Family Worship is—*The efficiency it gives to ministerial labour*. Our labour does not so effectually avail for our people's good as, we trust, it otherwise would do, because the parents and masters of our people do not more generally follow our public ministrations with their private admonitions. Every head of a family is bound to "provide for those of his own household:" and which, with most anxiety and carefulness ought he to provision them,—things temporal or spiritual? Wherefore is he vested with authority if it be not to use and to improve it? He is to "*command*" his children and his household; he is to command them "*after him*"—*himself* is to be their exemplar, and to lead the way to the mercy-seat of the one great Lord and Master of us all. As there was a Church in the

* In repeated instances has the Author found among the adult population of his Parish the beneficial effect of having lived in *praying* families. Many have acquired all their knowledge of religious truth (instrumentally of course) from the Family Worship of their Parent or Master.

house of Nymphas and Philemon, so should there be in his house. Like Job he should plead "continually" the merit of the death of Christ both with and for his household. From worshipping the Lord in his sanctuary, he should, like David, "return to bless his own house." And did this conduct more generally prevail, we believe verily, Ministers would not have so often and so mournfully to ask, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"[v] or, again, to complain, "I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought."[w] If our elder hearers—the Parents and Masters of our parishioners, applied to themselves what they heard; treasured it in their own hearts and memories; and made it subsequently the matter of inquiry and conversation among their children and servants, O how materially would their so doing aid and further our ministration of the Word! And if in the every household that composes the population of our parish, the voice of supplication was daily heard, the Bible was daily read—its holy doctrines believed and its commands observed, and thanksgiving with the voice of melody acknowledged daily the gracious and abounding mercies of the Lord, O how certainly would this tend to the prosperity of our common Zion and promote the interests of piety and morality amongst us! "*By reason of use*," the spiritual senses of our people would acquire a nice discernment of good and evil. Our "babes in Christ" would become children; our children would become "young men;" and our young men "fathers."[x] Thus "all who desire the sincere milk of the Word would *grow* thereby," and be qualified for the reception of stronger and more substantial food.[y]

And, whatever advantage the worship and service of God in our families *failed* to produce,—our per-

[v] Isa. liii 1. [w] Ib. xlix. 4. [x] 1 John ii. 12, 13. [y] 1 Pet. ii, 2.

formance of a plain and acknowledged duty would bring with it its own reward. As in Psalm xixth and 11th verse, we read, "In *keeping God's commandments there is a great reward*"—a present consciousness of integrity, a present "delight in the law of God after the inward man;" and the "reward of grace" in a world of future and eternal blessedness. Abraham *commanded* his children and his household after him: they *kept* the way of the Lord; they *did* justice and judgment, and the Lord *brought* upon Abraham that which he had spoken of him. "Abraham, after a life of faith and love continued through an hundred threescore and fifteen years, gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years;" and when he had been gathered to his fathers, "God blessed Isaac his son," and through successive generations did the blessing of the Lord rest upon Abraham's seed.[z] In like manner, if it be in our heart to say, "Now, therefore, let it please thee *to bless the house* of thy servant; that it may be before thee for ever; for thou blessest, O Lord:"—then may we believingly add, "*and it shall be blessed for ever.*"[a] "For God is not," says St. Paul, "unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewn towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end. That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."[b] On every child of faithful Abraham the Lord will bring that which, in the fulness of his love towards us in Christ Jesus, he hath spoken. While the curse of the Lord shall be in the house of the wicked, he will bless the habitation of the just.[c]

Such are some of the many advantages derivable from Family Worship. I was to shew you

[z] Gen. xxv, 8—11.
[a] 1 Chron. xvii, 27.
[b] Heb. vi, 10—12.
[c] Prov. iii, 33.

III. and finally, *The* EXCUSES *made for neglecting it.*

These, we hope, those of you who neglect the worship of God in your families will observe; and hence perceive that the excuses which will satisfy us will not satisfy God, nor, by any means, lessen our obligation to fulfil a plain and necessary duty.

An excuse made by many for neglecting Family Worship is—*Want of ability to pray in the presence of others or to lead a family's devotions.* We have no talents or gifts, say they, for the work: we should only expose ourselves. Now, it so happens that this is almost the only case in which people pretend to have a very mean opinion of their own abilities. They will not uncommonly be found to entertain a very high opinion of their own abilities in most other matters; but, when required to "command their children and their households after them," O they have no ability to do so. But, admitting you have not ability to do so, you may seek and ask it. "Lord," said the disciples of Jesus, "teach us to pray," and he taught them.[d] I doubt not, however, but some of you may sincerely desire to teach your households "the way of the Lord," and to pray with your children and domestics daily: but, you *fear* you have not ability; you want courage to begin; a false shame hinders you. Now, let me ask, Does the heart pray? Is the eye single? Would you in simplicity serve your Lord and benefit your families? Would you that God should be for salvation around you and a glory in the midst of you? Then, fear not. Hope and be undismayed. The God whom you *would* serve, does not regard "excellency of speech" or fluency of expression: He looks on the heart; he notices purpose and desire. And if, on trial, you could not express your sentiments and feelings with becoming readiness and

[d] Luke xi, 1.

propriety, you could use a Form of prayer.* There is nothing whatever objectionable in the use of a Form of Prayer, simply and scripturally worded. The language of our Liturgy, with variation where necessary, is admirably adapted to express either our wants or our acknowledgements, either our joys or our sorrows, before the Lord. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not."[e] Then, a pretended want of ability cannot excuse the worship of God in our families.

Others, again, will say, *We fear being ridiculed:* we fear we shall be thought too strict and precise. This excuse oftentimes has great weight with those who urge it. So many neglect Family Worship that we are necessitated to be peculiar if we adopt it. Here, however, I observe—The irreligion of the multitude should be a powerful incentive with us to cherish religious habits and the fear of God in our houses. Look at Abraham: he stood almost the *alone* worshipper of God in a sinful world. And though all around us spurned from their dwellings every vestige of domestic piety, it affords no reason why we should do the same. Whom are we obligated to for all our mercies—man or God? If to God, which are we obligated to fear and worship? Is "the curse" which, as a poisonous bane, is in the house of the wicked to be preferred to "the blessing which maketh rich and addeth no sorrow with it?" If you are thought peculiarly strict and precise, ought you not to be so when you recollect what a gracious

* This discourse led to the adoption of Jenks's Prayers, edited by the Rev. C. Simeon, of King's College, Cambridge, among some of the Author's people. He deems it an excellent manual of devotion. A less expensive one, and therefore one more within the reach of the poorer classes, is that of 'Prayers for every day in the Week' by the Religious Tract Society.

[e] 2 Cor. viii, 12.

and merciful Lord you serve? Do you not know that he "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a *peculiar* people, zealous of good works?"[f] And should it not be cause of devoutest joy that we *may be* so *peculiarly* the friends and servants of Jesus Christ? "The way of the Lord" is ten thousand times more pleasurable and delightful than the way of the world. Man may frown disdainfully upon us—scout our Family Worship—think it beneath him to kneel with us around our family altar—and by every unkind look and gesture in his power may contemn our religious services: but what matters it if our God smiles approvingly upon us, and bestows upon us his fear, his truth, his love, and all the riches of the full assurance of his faith?—Those who make the ridicule of a fellow-worm an excuse for neglecting to command the daily attendance of their children and others under their authority, to the worship of God, would do well to consider what is written in the viii. chapter of St. Mark, and the 38 verse. Let me add, too, this equally applies to those persons who, in general, it may be, have Family Worship, but when they have a friend or stranger with them in their house, unaccustomed, as they suppose, to the service, they omit it. This betrays a fear of man, and a shame of Christ and of his words, totally unbefitting a profession of religion. What! ashamed of our God! ashamed of our relationship to "the King eternal, immortal, invisible!" ashamed of his worship! ashamed of what will constitute our "eternal excellency," and be our employment through everlasting ages! O shame on our shame: Let not the fear of being ridiculed evermore excuse or prevent the worship of God in our families.

Another excuse urged by some is,—*We have no time:* A parent or a master will often say, 'Myself and household are always occupied: we are engaged in

[f] Tit. ii, 14.

business early and late, from morning till night: we have, consequently, no time for assembling ourselves to read and pray.' Bring this excuse to the Bible. Abraham had flocks and herds exceeding many, and very much cattle. Job, too, had the same. Joshua was the Leader and Commander of all the armies of Israel. David occupied a throne, and had all the cares of government on his mind—and yet all these fathers and heads of families, numerous as were their possessions and their concerns, found time to command their children and their households after them. Besides, if you are so exceedingly engaged in your worldly callings, you ought especially to maintain the life and power of godliness in your several and respective dwellings in order to counteract the influence of so much worldly care on the minds of your children and others. But, have you *really* no leisure?—none for amusement?—none for trifling occupations?—none for vain, giddy, and babbling visitants?—Then, how dare you presume to say that you cannot collect your households a few minutes morning and evening for the worship and service of God? Why give all your time to provisioning a perishing body with perishable good? Why not give some *few* of its fleeting moments, at least, to the soul's instruction and to the claim, the just and righteous claim, of a good and gracious God upon your heart, and mind, and strength, and time, and all? Would it be matter of little consequence in succeeding years for our children to know the way of the Lord, to love the paths of holiness and truth, to exercise judgment and justice, to be useful and honourable members of human society, and then "fellow-citizens" with their fathers of "the Jerusalem that is above?" Had they not better even to lose some portion of their temporal wealth or comfort, than to forego the probable advantages of domestic piety?—But, in fact, we believe a want of time for Family Worship proceeds, in most cases, from a dislike to the duty, or an improper management of

time. If you appoint stated and determined seasons, which shall be found most convenient, and keep to them regularly, you will find it to be as easy to collect your family together, and as indispensable to have regular family devotion, as it is to have your daily meals. Difficulties will vanish before Christian determination. Children and servants will expect it: and there will be felt a disagreeable loss if Family Worship be omitted. Time *will* be found for it. Whatsoever may be done or left undone, God will be worshipped: and where thus worshipped amidst opposing difficulties and in a Christian spirit, God will again become "the glory of his servant's house."[g] His smile will prosper labour, and labour will endear rest and repose in the bosom of Divine benevolence. I am aware, those sons or servants engaged in agricultural pursuits could not always attend the *morning's* worship: but none need be absent from the worship of the *evening*. Want of time, then, cannot be allowed as an excuse for not worshipping God in our families.

Sometimes we hear an excuse of this kind alleged—*Some part of my household would oppose me:* One or more of my family would dislike Family Worship; it would be a restraint on them. No well-managed child or servant would complain of a Parent's or a Master's well-exercised authority over him. The household of a *Christian* father will revere and honour him. His whole deportment will assure them that he mainly affects their good, and requires nothing of them but what will ultimately promote their happiness. Assured of this, they will need no entreaty to kneel with him at a throne of grace, nor will they turn away from Him who speaketh to them in his Word from heaven. Should you, however, be unhappily opposed by any member of your household, and one or more should slight the worship of God in your family's devotions,—still maintain your authority; "command" obedience

[g] Zech. xii, 7.

to your wish, and however opposed, be firmly resolved that as for you and your house, you *will* serve the Lord. Give nothing up that concerns your duty. Be determined in your care of the immortal souls which compose your household. Heed not the scowl of discontent or the sneer of scorn. "Be pitiful." Perhaps it is your own fault, in part, that your children and dependents are not more respectfully subservient and obedient to you. Think *Who* can make them all they should be. Seek for them as well as for yourself "the kingdom of God and his righteousness:" Do so "believing verily" that all other things, needful to your happiness, shall be given to you with the kingdom and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Then with holy David shall you say, "I will sing of mercy and judgment, unto thee, O Lord, will I sing:" and be enabled in the strength of the Lord to add, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart."[h]

A final excuse we shall notice is this—*Fear of personal restraint.* This excuse, if we mistake not, lies at the root of almost every other. Let the heart be examined, and many a one will find there—'I am fearful of a restraint upon myself: I am afraid if I have daily Family Worship in my house, I shall not be able to indulge myself and enjoy the world as I am disposed to do: More will be expected from me then, than is expected now: I must be consistent: If I say *Hallowed be thy Name,* I must not take the name of God in vain: If I read *Swear not at all,* I must not swear myself: If I tell my children and servants to *Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,* they must not see their father and their master living in the profanation of it: If I tell them to do justice and judgment, I must not be otherwise than just and true myself: If I command my children and my household after me, I ought to precede them in the way of the Lord, and to lead to the due fulfilment of every relative

[h] Ps. 101, 2.

and Christian duty: This I am not disposed to do, and therefore it excuses my neglect of Family Worship.' Now, this we do not suppose to be often spoken in word: but is it not too often the language of the heart? And if it be, think what a mark this is of a man's spiritual state! How does it evince a most lamentable hardness of heart and contempt of God's commandment! How does it countenance the world's forgetfulness of its Maker, and say to the many of its families who are glad to excuse their negligence, "What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit should we have, if we pray to him?"[i] And how may this impediment to domestic piety be done away? By becoming ourselves what our households should be. Let us "acquaint ourselves with God." Let us pray him to make known unto us his "way"—to "make plain his way before our face," and to enable us to walk steadily and consistently therein.[k] "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."[l] He can effect our deliverance from every thing that hinders the prevalence of piety in our own hearts and amongst those committed to our charge. He can bring us into a "glorious liberty" of thought and action. He can make our houses "Beth-els" and the daily worship of himself the sweetest and most grateful employment of our lives. "And behold, says God, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."[m]

Trusting now that your *excuses* for neglecting Family Worship are invalidated and silenced; that you are desirous, too, of the *advantages* derivable from it, and convinced of the *obligation* you are under to maintain it, I come, in conclusion, to RECOMMEND ITS ADOPTION TO YOU.

[i] Job xxi, 15. [k] Ps. 25. 1—5. [l] Ps. 27. 14.
[m] Rev. iii, 20.

From this day let God be worshipped in your families. O my People, think how pained your Minister must feel as he goes out and in among you, and passes by now here, now there, and yonder another of your dwellings, where the voice of praise and supplication never sounds—where mercy is never asked and thanks are never given. Do you not see how greatly pained and discouraged we must feel? Whereas, how pleased and encouraged should we be, were we assured that in all your dwellings there was reared an altar to our common Lord! Then, O ye who hitherto have neglected—I will not say this *duty* merely, but this high and ennobling *privilege*—neglect it now no longer. Masters and parents, give unto your servants and children that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master and a Parent in heaven. Believe yourselves bound by solemn obligation to conduct your families' worship. Let your children grow up habituated to the service. When you engage your servants, let it form a part of your stipulation with them that they shall be at home at your seasons of devotions, and attend those seasons orderly. Let the Word of God be daily read in your houses. If practicable, let "a Psalm or Hymn or Spiritual Song" sometimes enliven your worship. And close with Prayer. Pray, as I have said, with a Form of prayer, if you cannot pray without. Use whatever helps you need rather than be prayerless households. Let a few moments recollection always, if possible, precede your engagement in family duty. It is a good plan previously to meditate on some portion of holy Scripture: while you thus muse, the fire will kindle, and at the last you will speak with your tongue.[n] What comes warm from your heart will warm the hearts of others: what affects you, will affect them. Jesus will appear in your midst and say, "Peace be to you." He will bring on you that which he hath spoken. He will pour on you

[n] Ps. 39. 3.

his Spirit. "The savour of his knowledge" shall increase. "THE WAY" will be glorified in you. So shall ye hasten the new heaven and the new earth's creation. The holy city shall be seen coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her Husband; and angels in the mightiness of their strength shall say, "BEHOLD, *the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God.*"[o]

O that ye, to whom I speak, may come with the many that shall come from the east and from the west; from the north and from the south, and may ye sit with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the holy, triumphant, and everlasting kingdom of the great God our Saviour, Jesus Christ! To him be dominion, glory, praise, and power, now and evermore. Amen.

[o] Rev. xxi, 1—3.

DISCOURSE XXIX.

THE PRAYER OF JABEZ.

1 Chronicles iv, 10.

And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.

There are among the many things written in holy Scripture for our admonition and instruction, several remarkable instances of the acceptableness and prevalence of fervent prayer. Abraham interceded six times for the cities of the Plain, and was answered after each renewal of his prayer.[a] Jacob wrestled in prayer with God for a blessing, and the wrestling Jacob became the prevailing Israel.[b] Hezekiah under sore affliction prayed for the prolongation of his life, and fifteen years were added to the days of the years of his pilgrimage.[c] Hannah, whose peculiar portion was a praying spirit, asked a son: a son was given to her.[d] Jehoshaphat, the pious king of Judah, when his dominions were invaded by the Ammonites and others, summoned his

[a] Gen. xviii, 23. [b] Ib. xxxii, 28. [c] 2 Kings, xx, 2.
[d] 1 Sam i, 11—20.

nobles, his people, and even mothers with their little ones, about him: solemnly placed both himself and them under the Divine protection, and prayed for succour and deliverance: wonderfully was he both succoured and delivered:[e] Daniel prayed for the restoration of his brethren from captivity: "whiles he was yet speaking in prayer," an answer was vouchsafed to him.[f] When Peter was confined and even bound with chains within his prison-walls, prayer procured him freedom and enlargement.[g] Nor less remarkable than those just specified, was the Prayer of Jabez, Who Jabez was—from whom descended or to whom related, we cannot positively determine. We learn only from the verse immediately preceding our text, that he was an *honourable* man, *more* honourable than his brethren; and that his Mother called him *Jabez* because she bare him in *sorrow*.* In what respects Jabez was more honourable than his brethren, or on what grounds his birth was so sorrowfully commemorated by his Mother, we are not informed. This, however, we certainly know,—and this is what we are chiefly concerned to know relative to this honourable man—"*Jabez called on the God of Israel.*" The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, was his God. No graven image won the homage of Jabez: he poured out his requests to no dumb and powerless idol. A child of grief, he knew the one gracious and merciful Refuge of the distressed and afflicted soul. Possibly the calamities which had befallen himself or family, had tended to increase and deepen the ardour of his piety. Importunity in prayer is a touch-stone whereby all pretences to religion may be surely tried. It is well when the heart feels unutterable things.[h] In the prayer of Jabez, there seems to have been more felt than words could

* The name Jabez signifies *sorrowful.*

[e] 2 Chron. xx, whole ch. [f] Ch. ix, 20. [g] Acts xvi, 5—16. [h] Rom. viii, 26.

express. There is in it a depth of feeling, a fervency of desire, which I fear, few of us, favoured as we are with clearer Revelations of God's will and more abundant means of grace than Jabez was, experience or enjoy in our approaches to the Mercy-seat. "*Oh,*" says he, "*that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand may be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!*" And large as his petitions were, full and comprehensive as were his desires, "*God granted him that which he requested.*"

Now, without insisting particularly on the necessity, the duty, and importance of Prayer; I mean easily and simply to notice, First, *The Prayer before us,* and Secondly, *Our encouragement to pray the same.*

In noticing
First, *The Prayer before us.*

We shall mark its several petitions as they follow each other in succession. And, first, in calling upon Israel's God, Jabez says, "Oh, that thou wouldest bless me indeed!" What ardour of expression do these few words contain! "*Bless* me:" "Bless *me:*" "Bless me *indeed:*" "Oh, that *thou* wouldest bless me: and "*Oh!* that thou wouldest bless me indeed." This good man percieves a worth in the blessing of his God infinitely surpassing all his earthly honour and pre-eminence. For this he pants. His very soul goes forth in desire unspeakable to possess it. 'Oh! that I might be blessed: Oh! that I might be blessed indeed: Oh! that I might see the felicity of God's chosen, and triumph with them in the fruition of their hope.' Thus Jabez prayed. Honourable he was, and more honourable than his brethren;—affluent, we may suppose, in worldly circumstances, and happy amid the smiles and caresses of all who like him called on the God of Israel: but, would this suffice him? no: "the honour which cometh of man," Jabez felt to be a trivial and an unsubstantial thing: he therefore

sighed for "the honour which cometh of God." Man blessed him: but calling upon the Lord, he says, "Oh! that THOU wouldest bless me." Nor can *we*, my Brethren, too sedulously seek, too importunately ask, the blessing of Almighty God. We may conceive ourselves to be "rich and increased with goods:" we may be honourable among our fellows: many may regard our presence, our influence, and authority, with respectful deference: but all these are adventitious things: the most worthless of our kind may possess them, and all the while the blessing of the Highest may not be upon us. And what if God be angry with us? What if he smile not in mercy on our souls? His blessing alone maketh *truly* rich.[i] It is as he blesseth us that our way is prosperous.[k] We must be blessed of him to be really great and good.[l] Ought we not then to ask and seek that we may receive and find God's blessing? Let us cry, "Oh, that thou wouldest bless me:" and again, "*Bless me, even me also, O my Father!*" Assured we may be that our Heavenly Father hath not "one" merely, but many a blessing to bestow on the soul that calls upon him.[m] "*With all spiritual blessings* are we blessed in Christ Jesus:"[n] Surely, then, we should not with *less* importunity than Jabez beg the Lord to bless us: and "I wot that whom HE blesseth, is blessed." Blessed "indeed" shall we be: blessed in our down-sitting and our uprising; blessed in our basket and our store; blessed in the city and in the field; blessed in our going out and our coming in; the Lord will open to us his good treasure, and we shall be blessed in the experience of his grace; we shall be above only and shall not be beneath: yea, the Lord will establish us an holy people to himself, as he has covenanted with us in our Surety, and all people of the earth shall see that we are called by the Name of the Lord, and are those whom *the Lord hath blessed*.[o]

[i] Prov. x. 22. [k] Isa. xlviii. 15. [l] Mat. xxv. 34.
[m] Gen. xxvii. 34—38. [n] Eph. i. 3. [o] Deut. xxviii. 1—13.

Jabez next prays for "enlargement of coast." What he particularly means by this petition, we do not pretend to say. It might possibly relate to territory, and Jabez might pray this prayer for the more convenient accommodation of his dependents, and his flocks and herds.* Be this, however, as it may, without by any means wresting the sacred text, we may understand it to me an *enlargement of heart*, increase of devotional feeling towards God, and a more enlarged capacity to receive and to retain his blessing. There is a correspondency of experience in the saints of every age. "One and the self-same Spirit" works that experience, and though it may be very various in its joys and sorrows, and its hopes and fears, yet is its origin and its end the same. Though not in *his God*, Jabez might feel "straightened" in *himself*, as many a servant of the Lord does now. Well befitting such a state is the petition, "Enlarge my coast." And who of us all does not need to present this petition before the Lord? Who of us all needs not more grace whereby more feelingly to enter into the meaning of Isaiah's beautiful expression—"The desire of our soul is to thy Name and to the remembrance of thee?"[p] Even when our soul's desire *is* God-ward, and we *do* remember him, how straightened do we oft times feel! how bounded are our views! how confined our desires! how low and few our hopes! Well then does it behove us to ask "a more abundant entrance" into the faith, the hope, and the love of "the common salvation." God commended Solomon's choice of wisdom, rather than silver and gold, reputation and honour; and gave him much "*largeness of heart*."[q] If, then, any of us lack wisdom, let us ask it of God.[r] Let us pray for still deeper and more humbling views of our native sinfulness: Let us ask for still clearer and more exhilirating views of Jesus Christ, and the Saviour's suit-

* Genesis xiii, 6. makes our supposition not improbable.

p Ch. xxvi 8. q 1 Kings iii. 9. and iv. 29. r James i. 5

ability to the sinner's necessity: Let us beg for brighter, more vivid, and more realizing perceptions of unseen realities: Let us, in fine, in words much loved by some of you, say,

"Give me the enlarg'd desire
And open, Lord, my soul;
Thy own fulness to require,
And comprehend the whole.

Stretch my faith's capacity,
Wider and yet wider still;
Then with all that is in thee,
My gladsome spirit fill."

For this did Paul bow his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this with holy fervour did he supplicate for his dear Ephesian converts.[s] And in this way may our coast be immeasurably enlarged. We "have a goodly heritage:" let us not be contented to tarry on its borders. Much yet remains to be possessed. Let us go up and possess it. We are well able when our Almighty Lord is our Guide and Guardian. None may dispute our right to what he gives us; and when he says—"To you will I give this land," we may confidently pray this prayer of Jabez, "Enlarge my coast."

The third petition which Jabez prefers is, "And that thine hand may be with me." *Hand* in the language of Scripture has a great variety of meanings. Where it occurs, the context will usually determine its proper signification. Here, as in numerous other parts of the sacred Volume, it imports the sovereign power and strength of the Lord—or, perhaps, the union of his goodness and ability to succour and befriend the soul that serves him. Jabez, doubtless, felt himself to be *in himself* a weak and helpless creature:—(and who that is "taught of God" does not?)—he therefore made not gold his confidence, nor confided in the multitude of his riches. "I will not trust in my bow,"

[s] Eph. iii. 14—19.

might he think; "neither shall my sword save me."[t] "I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness," is God's gracious promise to his believing child:[v] and gratefully might Jabez say, "Thy right hand shall save *me*."[w] And better shall we find it to put our trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in man, or in creature-counsels. We can only be secure in Divine protection. It is when "the Lord God of Israel fights for Israel," that Israel alone can prevail. He that blesses and enlarges the praying soul, must maintain its life, recruit its strength, supply its wants, cheer its hopes, and eventually terminate its conflicts in victory and triumph. How earnestly then should we implore "the good hand of our God upon us!" It is only as his hand is upon us that we can prosper. Of the isles it is said—"On mine arm shall they lean:" and may we not cherish the most simple and entire dependence on the arm of the Lord? Is it shortened that it cannot save? Does it not sustain "as a very little thing" the mountains and the hills of the earth?[x] Does it not hold the sun and the moon and the stars in their courses?[y] Does it not uphold the inhabitants of the eternal world in their blessed allegiance to their Lord? Hath it not bound the powers of darkness with chains they cannot sever? Hath it not ever continually from the beginning sustained the weakness and preserved the soul of the believer?[z] Hid in the hollow of Jehovah's hand, can any pluck us thence?[a] In all times of our tribulation may we pray, "Let thine hand help me."[b] In the hour of nature's dissolution, may we cry, "Into thy hand I commend my spirit."[c] And as our spirit wings its upward flight, cheerfully may we sing, "The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly: the right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly!"[d]

[t] Ps. 44. 6.
[v] Isa. xli, 10.
[w] Ps 138. 7.
[x] Isa. xl, 15.
[y] Ib. xl, 26.
[z] Deut. xxxiii, 27.
[a] John x, 28.
[b] Ps. 119 173.
[c] Ib. 31. 5.
[d] Ib. 118. 15, 16.

Jabez goes on, finally, to add, "And that thou wouldest keep me from evil that it may not grieve me." *Evil* applies to sin; to suffering as the consequence of sin; and to the evil one through whose temptation we have sinned. Our nature is depraved; our heart is deceitful; and through our depravity and self-deception, wealth, honour, and human approval, become snares to us. What should have been for our profit, tends to our loss. To this Jabez might feel himself particularly exposed. He felt that he could not keep himself—that his own resolutions and endeavours were not alone sufficient to deliver him from evil or the grief it would occasion him. His petition therefore is, "Oh! that THOU wouldest keep me." He wished the *Lord* to keep him: to keep him lowly and contrite in the days of outward comfort, and to be himself his shield and buckler in the seasons of spiritual conflict. He wanted that view of the Divine perfections which would assure him that all things, however apparently opposed to his good, should ultimately prove beneficial to him. Hence, he would not "sorrow without hope" nor be "greatly moved" amidst the ever varying movements of human affairs. And who can deliver *us* from evil that it grieve us not, but the God of Jabez? Though we may be blessed and enlarged and protected, yet who of us all is not liable to temptation, to sorrow, to personal sickness, and to bereavements of various and distressful kinds? Would we then from all these seeming evils see the hand of the Lord still adducing good? Would we be delivered from the almost numberless evils that too surely lodge within us? Would we tread on the powerful maliciousness of that evil one who as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour? Would we that the venom of sin should be extracted, and the nature of temporal calamity be changed? Would we be secure in times of wealth and resigned in times of tribulation? Let us pray our covenant-God in Christ to keep us. It is

only the Lord that can safely keep us; and he can so keep us from evil that it shall not grieve us. "The Lord, it is declared, will deliver his servant in the day of evil."[e] "There shall no evil happen to him" but through the grace of our Lord, it shall prove a good.[f] Every humble follower of Jesus may go on his way, saying as he goes, "I will fear no evil for thou art with me:"[g] and no sooner will he have reached the gates of the heavenly Zion, but "sorrow and sighing shall flee away," and he himself shall be crowned with fadeless joy and everlasting gladness. Satan himself will God bruise under our feet shortly.[h] Not his utmost hate will grieve us while we can truly say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his; I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him."[i] Blessed with a *Saviour's* help; assured of a *Saviour's* love; and kept by a *Saviour's* power, we may "rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer." "Who is he that condemneth, since it is *the Christ* that died?" "Who shall separate us from the love of God"—since that love the floods of our ungodliness could not quench?[k] The promise of Him who keepeth Israel with ceaseless and wakeful watchfulness is—"I, the Lord, do keep it: I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."[l] We may surely, then, believe that "if any hurt a praying follower of Jesus, they hurt the apple of Jehovah's eye,"[m] and hence we gather how confidently we may ask him to "keep us from evil that it may not grieve us."

Such was the Prayer of Jabez: And from noticing its several petitions, we proceed to notice,

SECONDLY, *Our encouragement to pray the same.*

"And God granted Jabez that which he requested" —say the concluding words of our text. God blessed

[e] Ps. 41. 1. [f] Ib. 91. 10. [g] Ib. 23. 4.
[h] Rom. xvi, 20. [i] Cant. ii, 16. 2 Tim. 1—12.
[k] Cant. viii, 7. [l] Isaiah xxvii, 3, [m] Zech. ii, 8.

him, and blessed him indeed; God enlarged his coast; God mightily defended him; God kept him from evil so that it did not grieve him: and does not the vouchsafement of Jabez' prayer encourage us to pray the same? Does it not show us,

That God heareth prayer? Great and glorious as the God of Israel is, yet does he bow down a listening ear to the voice of human supplication. The cry of distress he especially heeds. A "Jabez"—"a child of sorrow," may the every son and daughter of fallen Adam be denominated. When sensible of our wretchedness, we "pour out our complaints before the Lord and shew him of our trouble," "he heareth us." He heard the intercession of Abraham for the cities of the Plain. He permitted Jacob to prevail and to obtain the blessing which he so passionately desired. He listened to the sore mourning of Hezekiah and commissioned a Prophet to assure him that his prayer was heard. He marked the silent movement of Hannah's lips, and fulfilled her heart's desire. Jehoshaphat he enabled to put to flight an Alien's armies by prayer. Daniel was heard in the "beginning of his supplication," and an angel of swiftest wing came down to say, "Thy prayer is heard." Prayer won the ear and moved the hand of high Omnipotence to bring Peter through bars and gates of iron, and to set him in the midst of praying brethren. Jabez called on God and all that he requested was vouchsafed to him. And is it not a sweet and delightful truth that the God of Jabez, the God of all the worthies we have just enumerated, is OUR God? that happily we are not worshippers of a god which having eyes seeth not, and having ears heareth not? Disclaiming all other lords, we acknowledge the one true and eternal Lord. Him we honour as God our Father, God our Saviour, and God our Sanctifier. We find in him our best Friend, our mightiest Protector, our most sympathizing Brother.[n] His favour,

[n] Prov. xviii 24.

consciously possessed, forms the all in all our happiness. We believe him to be acquainted with all our ways and wants and cares. "*He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?*" He that formed the heart with all its faculties of perception—all its sensibilities and powers, shall not he know, perceive, and feel?[o] How encouraged, then, should we be to pray unto the Lord our God! "Hear us, O our God," should we say;[p] and rest in the assured persuasion, "My God will hear me."[q] "This is the confidence we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."[r] For, does not the prayer of Jabez shew us, moreover,

That God answereth prayer? Mark the several prayers we have repeatedly alluded to, and see how signally, how readily, how graciously, they were answered. 'How know you,' we get sometimes asked, whether our prayers be heard or no?' "*We* KNOW *that God heareth us,*" because "*we* KNOW *that we have the things petitioned for.*" No angel, indeed, nor prophet is sent to say that our prayers are heard: but, a consciousness of their acceptance and vouchsafement pervades our mind—a *consciousness,* the reality of which no praying soul can doubt. The Divine Nature is "without variableness or shadow of turning:" if God was yesterday gracious to the souls that sought him, he is the same to-day, and will be so for ever. If with complacency and delight he listened to the prayer of Jabez and granted him that which he requested, he will listen with equal complacency and delight to the voice of our supplication. He pardoneth, he justifieth, he consoleth, he saveth, the man of prayer. Abundantly beyond all that we can think or ask, he doeth for us. Jesus—not with the blood of bulls and of

[o] Ps. 94. 9. [p] Neh. iv, 4. [q] Mic. vii, 7.
[r] 1 John v, 14, 15.

goats, but with his own, is entered into the holy place, that is, into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. The promise runs, "Ask what ye will and it shall be done for you:" and, therefore, "*When I call upon thee,*" may the Believer say, "*thou wilt answer me.*"[s] We call not upon a Baal, saying, "O Baal, hear us;" and where then can be "neither voice nor any to answer us:" but we call on "the God of Israel"—a God who mercifully declares, "Before they call, I will answer: and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."[t] "Let us, therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."[v]

But does not the Prayer of Jabez encourage us to hope, *That God will grant us that which we request of him?* When the holy Spirit brings the soul into near and endearing communion with its reconciled Father in Christ, that question seems to meet us in all our approaches to him. "*What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?*"[w] or that permission "*Ask what I shall give thee:*"[x] Wouldest thou be blessed, wouldest thou thy coast should be enlarged? wouldest thou that my hand should be with thee? and that no evil should grieve thee? "Ask and you shall receive." When my designs were hid in dark and shadowy rites, Jabez prayed and I granted him that which he requested: Can you imagine me to be less gracious now my designs are ripened into effect and deed?—O how should this encourage us "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make known our requests unto God!" He is the Lord, and changes not.[y] His goodness is a shoreless fathomless ocean and faileth not. The "wonders which he doeth" and hath ever done "for the children of men" flow from it.[z] Our emergencies are as great and our enemies as numerous as were those

[s] Ps. 86. 7. [t] 1 Kings xviii, 26. Isa. lxv, 24.
[v] Heb iv, 16. [w] Mark x, 51. [x] 1 Kings iii, 5.
[y] Mal iii, 6. [z] Ps. 107. 8.

of Jabez. His blessing alone can refresh and satisfy our souls. It is only where he commandeth his *blessing*, that there is "life for ever more."[a] All will be desolate sterility where *that* is not. Our nature is equally depraved and weak with that of Jabez: the world is still as it ever was since the first transgression, the enemy of truth and godliness: The same dangers attend on wealth and honour as attended them in the days of Jabez: and Satan is as powerful and malicious now as when Jabez lived below: unless therefore "the hand of the Lord be with us," we shall fail in warring a successful warfare, and consequently shall fail also of the conqueror's crown. The God of Israel only can extract the venom of evil and keep us composed and cheerful amidst the various ills of mortal life. Let us ask him to do so. Numerous, truly, our wants and weaknesses may be—numerous as the moments that make up our days and years; but the tender mercies of our God are numberless. "All things are your's;" but "for them I will be enquired of, saith the Lord, to do them for you."[b] "And whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing it shall be done for you." Deep then soever and comprehensive as our requests may be, we are encouraged to hope that our God will grant them.

Having noticed now the Prayer before us and our encouragement to pray the same: I would ADDRESS,

1. *Any among you who may live without prayer:*

But is it possible for any born in a Christian land, favoured with Christian Sabbaths, Means, and Ministers, and themselves denominated Christian, to *live without prayer?* O yes, very possible. Fact too surely proves that thousands do so. To multitudes you may say, 'Do you pray?' and they will be constrained to answer 'No.' Put the question only to your neighbours, and you will soon be thoroughly convinced

[a] Ps. 133. 3. [b] 1 Cor. iii, 22. Ezek. xxxvi, 37.

that we have not a few baptized infidels amongst us. Now, my Brethren, no words are sufficiently strong to express the danger of a prayerless soul. Prayer is the breath of the "new creature in Christ Jesus;" and that man who does not pray has not yet begun spiritually to exist. And where there is no spiritual existence, the soul must be wholly in bondage to corruption and enslaved by sense and sin. Remaining in this state, it must be lost for ever. I believe it quite as easy for the Devil himself to go to Heaven as it is for a prayerless unregenerate man to go there. No sooner are we "alive unto God"—no sooner are we conscious of our sinfulness and aware of our desert, but there will be a cry for mercy. When sensibly condemned in ourselves, we shall value a Saviour. Feeling our helplessness, we shall be saying, "Oh! that thou wouldest keep me and that thine hand may be with me." Where this is all unknown and all unfelt, there reigns "the darkness of the shadow of death." Hear this ye prayerless sinners! "O that mine head were waters and my eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night," while ye weep not for yourselves. O how clearly manifest it is that ye "know not the Lord"—that no Spirit of adoption cries within you "Abba, Father"—that ye value not the mercies of the Everlasting Covenant—that Jesus is still unlovely in your eyes—that ye are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel—and can entertain no scriptural hope in this world of glory in another. Say not, 'We have no learning and therefore cannot pray:' A starving wretch needs not learning to ask for food: A beggar knows full well how to crave our charity. You could easily ask some temporal good, if by asking you could have it. Say not again, 'We have no time to pray:' In whose hand is your breath, and Who adds to the number of those nights and days through which you prayerlessly live? O let not "the stork in the heaven know her appointed time, and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time

of their coming" and you yourselves be ignorant of the "judgment of the Lord," and indisposed to know it.[c] Ye are fallen creatures; condemned sinners; perishing immortals; ye therefore ought to pray. Ye need God's 'special grace' to awaken, to convert, to purify and save your souls: this you are taught to pray for:* You ask not: therefore you receive not. Then "take with you words, and return unto the Lord." Live not another day without calling upon the God of Israel. If his blessing be not upon you, his—how shall I speak it?—his curse will attend you. If his hand be not with you, it will be against you. If He enlarge you not, you will be bound and enslaved for ever. If He saves you not from evil, evil will grieve you unutterably. If, on the contrary, you come another self-condemned and guilty prodigal to your Almighty Father, he will meet you in love and abundantly pardon you. If there be the cry of penitence in your lips, the gracious Saviour will not spurn you from him. "Behold, he calleth thee": "O taste and see how gracious the Lord is; blessed are all they that put their trust in him!" But I would speak to

2. *Any among you who may pray formally.*

There are many who maintain a form of daily worship. If we ask them whether they pray, 'O yes, say they; we say our prayers every day.' But we much fear the prayers of many are formal, customary, unmeaning things. That they are so, may too easily be proved. Prayer with them induces self-complacency: it is, they think, so much done towards the purchase of salvation and eternal life: it is, too, a something which, they hope, will recommend them to God's favour and compensate for their sins. Thus they pray—not as a condemned criminal for mercy, or as a perish-

* Question in the Catechism before the Lord's Prayer.

[c] Jer. viii, 7.

ing soul to be saved—but to please themselves and to gratify the natural pride of the carnal mind. If other proof were wanting of formality in the prayers of many, one thing there is that indisputably proves it—*they look for no answer to their prayers:* they are not concerned to obtain what they ask for; yea, more, if God were to bestow on many the things they ask for, they would be disconcerted and surprised, and be ready, with more than usual earnestness, to beg him to resume his gifts. We might instance this in almost every prayer of the formalist. When asking God to write all the commandments of the Law in his heart; to be enabled diligently to keep them; to be altogether and unreservedly devoted to the Saviour's glory; and so on: Does he *mean* all this? Does he think that God will do as he has prayed him? Does he wait and watch and long to be answered? No! nothing like it: and hence we may be excused for saying that our belief is, the benches of the Church pray just as earnestly as some who sit upon them. 'O,' we sometimes hear it said; 'I say my prayers; and I go to Church.' Beloved, *saying* prayers is not *praying*, nor is *going to Church prayer*. I could tell you of one that attained to three score years and ten, and who after he was seventy-years of age, acknowledged that though he had kept his Church and said his prayers for many years of his long life, yet he believed that till then he had *never prayed at all*. I would this was an uncommon case. Now, with "the form of sound words which ye have received to hold," my desire is that you should "pray with the spirit and with the understanding also." God must be worshipped spiritually, to be worshipped acceptably.[d] He must not be to us an "*unknown* God." We must conceive worthily of him. The terrors of the offended Deity, must be lost in the mildness, the mercifulness, the loveliness, of a pitying and redeeming Saviour. "God

[d] John iv, 24.

is *in Christ* reconciling the world unto himself." It is by *Christ and through the Spirit,* that we have access to the Father.[e] When, therefore, you come before the Lord, it must be in the way of his appointment. Sincerity of purpose and desire must mark your approaches to him. Not only must you well say your forms of devotion, but there must be a heart correspondent with them.[f] You must mean what you say, and expect (with deference to the Divine will) what you ask. Prayer is the habit of a regenerate soul. It is the sigh, the groan, the wish, of the lowly and contrite spirit. We do not decry forms; we use them and approve of them:—but *rested in,* they are dangerous, and unaccompanied with the power of godliness, they are useless. Real religion is an inward thing: and I am solicitous that you carefully examine the nature of your prayers, why you say them, and what you expect from them, in order to judge correctly concerning the reality of your religion. See that you come not short of vital and influential "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." I say finally and

3. *To any of you who do truly pray,*

"Continue instant in prayer," "always, like Epaphras, labouring fervently in prayer," and like Jabez, crying, "O that thou wouldest bless me!" I am aware that many who do truly pray are wont to say, 'Ah! we pray, as we trust; but, alas! our prayers are so few, so cold, so straitened; we feel so many misgivings; the doubts and fears of our wicked heart so oft prevail, that we much fear our prayers are not heard, that God sees how we dishonour him by distrusting him; how our minds wander, and how impatient we sometimes are because our wants are not so soon supplied, as our vain hearts would have them.' Is this the language of one or more among you? Then certainly has God poured a Spirit of grace and of sup-

[e] Eph. ii, 18. [f] Deut. v, 28, 29.

plications on you. You do truly pray. Your aversion to formality and your desire to be sincere, evidence the Holy Spirit's presence in your heart. Fearful you may be; but hopeful you should be. It is well if you see that but for "the blood of sprinkling" your duties would as certainly condemn you as your sins. This leads you simply to rely on Jesus and him crucified. Through him alone you expect to be blessed, enlarged, and kept from evil. And whilst you ground the all of your dependence—not upon your saying prayers and keeping to your Church, though that you will do from purer motives and far nobler ends, but—on the merits and mediation of a Saviour you may "open your mouth wide and God will fill it." If you can find in yourselves the character to which any promise is annexed, you may ask with assurance of success the mercy promised. Am I, for example, "weary and heavy-laden?" Am I weary of sin and heavy-laden with its guilt? Then may I come to Jesus Christ, and in him I shall find "rest."[g] The same reasoning holds good with reference to every other promised blessing, and a praying soul may go on to ask every blessing that suits its character and necessity. God granted Jabez *all* which he requested: and even *more* than all we can either ask or think, can God do for us. Then, pray on. Remember Who "bears the iniquity of your holy things." Can human fears prevail to drown "the strong cryings" of Jesus Christ? Lives he not to make intercession for us? And though for the trial of our faith and in order to increase our importunity in prayer, the Lord "may make as though he heard us not," yet the "*Oh! that thou wouldest bless me*" of an adopted child most surely reaches the eternal Father's ear, and when it pleases him in his wisdom and mercy to notice it, he will bless that child "*indeed*." Does a Jabez—a child of sorrow, pray? "I will satiate, saith your God, the weary soul, and

[g] Matt. xi, 28.

replenish every sorrowful soul." Surely then "*ye ought alway to pray and not to faint.*" Even though the mercy ye supplicate be delayed in its bestowment: yet, "*wait for it*; it will surely come: it will not tarry" beyond the moment when it shall most refresh you. "*My God,* may you say, *we know thee.*"[h] You know him to be true, powerful, and kind: You know that he heareth prayer and answereth it: You know that he can do all things for you, and if ye will "watch and pray," you shall one day with high and rapturous praise declare—"There failed not aught of any good thing, which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass."[i]

[h] Hos. viii, 2. [i] Jos. xxi, 45.

NOTE.

The subjoined Address to the Holy Spirit will presently be recognized by many. It was penned by its now sainted Author on a blank leaf of the Common Prayer Book, and presented by him to one of his domestics. It is inserted here as applicable in subject to the three preceding Discourses:—

Holy Spirit, when in pray'r
I bow the knee, O be thou there;
With heavenly thoughts my soul inspire,
Fill me with true Devotion's fire:
Whether in *Secret* I implore
Assistance from thy sacred store;
Or with the *Household* train unite
In social worship morn and night;
Or in God's holy *Temple* raise
My hands and heart in pray'r and praise—
Come, Holy Spirit,—be my guard
E'en till I reach my free reward,
And joyful haleluias sing
With saints before my Saviour-king.

T. M. Ætat. 88.

DISCOURSE XXX.

THE CROSS OF JESUS.

JOHN xix, 25.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

THE cross of Jesus! what an interesting, and, if we may so say, what a painfully pleasing subject of contemplation is it to all who love a crucified Redeemer. The cross of Jesus! The mere mention of the cross of Jesus moves the sympathies and concentrates the regards of every tender and enlightened spirit. There is nothing in heaven above or in earth beneath—nothing in either the volume of nature or the volume of inspiration, that possesses half the excellence of the cross of Jesus. No glory remains in any thing by reason of the glory which excels in that. Fathomless depths of wisdom are contained in it: wonderfully gracious are its effects. Sung, doubtless, are its triumphs in all worlds; and hymned, doubtless, will Jesus be "as a Lamb that was slain," through all ages. The cross which his "betrayers and murderers" thought was to stigmatize him with infamy, is become the ensign of his renown. The preaching of it is the unfurled standard around which "all nations and kindreds and people and tongues" shall ultimately be ga-

thered.[a] Inasmuch as the Son of God "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" inasmuch as he was "a reproach of men and despised of the people; laughed to scorn; poured out like water; enclosed by the assembly of the wicked; pierced in his hands and feet," and still more severely tried by the withdrawment of his Father's presence; therefore "shall all the ends of the world remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him."[b] By his cross shall they stand, and in the contemplation of the woes endured thereon, find rest and peace of soul. "And I, said the Lord himself, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. And this said he, signifying what death he should die."[c] May it be given us, my Brethren, to feel the attractive influence of our Saviour's death, and may we love with Mary his mother, and Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene, to stand by the dying Jesus!

Our text we purpose to consider, first, with reference to the individuals spoken of in it; and secondly, with reference to ourselves: Let us consider it,

I. With reference to the individuals spoken of in it:

"Mary, the mother of Jesus; Mary, the wife of Cleophas; and Mary Magdalene," are the individuals spoken of as standing by the cross of our Lord. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, all take particular notice in their respective histories of the women who ministered unto Jesus, followed him to Calvary, and stood by the cross whereon he suffered. St. John only mentions three of them by name. He does so, perhaps, as writing subsequently to the other Evangelists, and as having himself stood with the Marys by the cross of Jesus and observed them there. They were, moreover, persons peculiarly characterized and therefore

[a] Isa. lxii, 10. [b] Ps. 22. 27. [c] John xii, 32. 33.

also worthy to be specifically mentioned. Mary, the mother of Jesus, would naturally feel a deep and solemn interest in all that befel her divine and gracious Son. To her, as the chosen daughter of faithful Abraham, it had been said, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name Jesus."[d] Though lowly born and cradled in a manger, angels had carolled his birth, and the virgin mother had seen gifts, "gold, frankincense, myrrh," presented with profoundest adoration to her child. To her and his reputed father Jesus had been meekly subject. She herself had sung "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour:" and therefore neither her exposure to danger, nor the mockery of a rude and lawless rabble, nor the melancholy sadness of the passing scene, could keep her from the Saviour's cross. —Mary the wife of Cleophas was one of the pious and devoted women who ministered to the temporal wants of our Lord. It is not determined in the original whether she was the *wife*, *mother*, or *daughter* of Cleophas: but it is generally believed she was his wife, and that he was also called Alpheus, and was the father, as this Mary was the mother, of James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, who are therefore called our Lord's brethren or kinsmen.[e] Be this, however, as it may, she was ardently and devoutly attached to her Lord. She had followed him with alacrity; had ministered to him cheerfully; had hung delighted on the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; had witnessed his power to heal and to forgive and save; and how could she but stand by his cross?—The other Mary, called also Magdalene, is supposed by some to have been a woman of Magdala, a large and populous town: and therefore denominated Mary Magdalene, or Mary of Magdala: but, we

[d] Luke i, 28—31. [e] Mat. xii, 46. Mark vi, 3.

incline rather to think that this individual is the same we read of in the viith. ch. of St. Luke's Gospel, and who so remarkably lay at the Redeemer's feet, washed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. She had been a notorious sinner. Her sins were many. Disdained and contemned she was by those who knew her. She, however, became convinced of her sinfulness: Jesus she heard to be the Friend of sinners: To him with contrition and tears she came: the proud and impious Simon despises her: the meek and lowly, the kind and holy Jesus, graciously receives her; acknowledges her love, assures her of her forgiveness, and bids her go in peace. So truly do "publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God" before the lovers of their own selves, and the righteous in their own conceit. And where, with more propriety, could a Magdalene be found than by the cross of Jesus? With feelings peculiarly her own—with much love, because much was forgiven her—would Mary Magdalene gaze on the pierced and dying Jesus. 'There,' might Mary the mother of Jesus say, 'There dies my *Son*, my dear and duteous Son; the promised Seed; the Desire of nations; the Saviour of a perishing world; the Lord of life to dying souls:' And 'There,' might his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, say, 'There dies my *Friend;* the Friend to whose wants I have so gladly ministered; the Friend whose presence ever cheered my heart; whose voice was music in mine ear, and whose word was the food and sustenance of my faith and hope:' but, 'There,' might the Magdalene say, 'There dies my *Saviour;* there dies that condescending Lord who spurned not from his feet a sinful, guilty, polluted, worm: there dies that Lord whose forgiving love bade my sorrows cease, wiped my tearful eyes, and blessed me with a peace unfelt in the ways of worldliness and sin' Who cannot but admire the generous zeal and the courageous constancy of these pious followers of Jesus! In their view the ignominy of the cross was lost. Through all

its shame, they saw the glory of Divine humiliation and redeeming mercy. As they stood by it, no other object of the visible creation could win their regards and contemplations. The cross of Jesus! O with what tenderness, with what deep and adoring wonder, did it inspire them. Their Saviour's every look, every deed, every word, would, we can easily imagine, be indelibly graven on their heart. His cross alone would they henceforward and only glory in. When, by the Spirit's testimony they should see more fully the richness, the fulness, the preciousness, of the Atonement, still dearer to them would be the cross of Jesus. They would see their eternal all involved in the mysterious scene before them. Should any insolently ask them, 'Was not your Jesus crucified? Was he not crucified with thieves and malefactors? Was he not reviled and mocked, spit upon and crowned in derision with a wreath of thorns? Did any of the chief priests or rulers believe on him?' Yes; they would answer, our Lord was crucified: well do we remember standing by his cross: but well do we remember too how dimly shone the sun even at noon-day: what darkness covered the land for several hours: how the ground quaked beneath us, and the rocks of Calvary rent asunder; and do not these things bespeak Majesty in distress, and the putting forth of godlike power for the achievement of some mighty and wondrous enterprise? Why shook creation, if in Jesus the Creator did not die? Why, when the centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus, saw what was done, why did they fear? Was it not their own acknowledgement, "Truly this was the Son of God?" And what if the chief priests and elders believed not on him? shall their unbelief make our faith of no effect? We believe and are sure that Jesus was numbered with transgressors and nailed to the accursed tree and crowned with thorns, and subject to the cruel hatred and needless barbarism of his creatures, in love to his creatures' souls, and for the expiation of his creatures' guilt;

and as in us, so in all who shall ever hereafter believe on him, you may see the powerful and gracious effects of his cross.—Our Lord marked the attendance of these women on his crucifixion. To his mother he said, "Woman;" commending her to his beloved disciple, and bidding her to behold in him a son. As if he had said, 'Bear towards him the affection of a tender mother; and yield me up resignedly to the glory that awaits me.' It was to Mary Magdalene that he first appeared on the morning of his resurrection from the dead. And the husband of the other Mary was one of the two disciples that subsequently walked so sorrowfully to Emmaus, and to whom Jesus drew nigh and expounded all things written in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets concerning himself. The Lord Jesus well knows those who love him; and with complacency, doubtless, did he mark Mary his mother; and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene, standing by his cross.

From considering our text with reference to the individuals spoken of in it, let us consider it

II. With reference to ourselves:

And first it will be proper to observe, that the cross—the crucified Jesus—the streaming but atoning blood—which the Marys with their bodily eyes beheld, we behold by faith. They were actual spectators of the marvellous scene: we are believers only in it. Nor will others' witness of the death of Christ, supersede the necessity of our belief of it. Each one of us individually must look unto Jesus and experience redemption in his blood for himself. Just as in the wilderness of Sinai, when the children of Israel were for their provocation bitten by serpents: the look of one to the serpent of brass which Moses was commanded to set up and affix to a pole, would not heal another; so no more will the Marys standing by the

cross avail any thing to our salvation, unless we stand by it too. Noticing, then, the text with reference to ourselves, I ask

Would we have our sins forgiven? Let us stand by *the cross of Jesus.* Though by "wicked hands he was crucified and slain," yet is his death the mysterious means of our forgiveness. "Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."[e] His life he laid down for our sakes.[f] The just for the unjust did he suffer. And through him is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.[g] Then would we that our heart should be sprinkled from an evil conscience? Let us come to the blood of sprinkling. Unhappily, when we feel our guiltiness we are prone to resort to other expedients for pardon rather than come immediately and directly to the cross of Jesus. But all unavailing do we prove them. Other sacrifice for sin, there is none save the dying of the Lord Jesus. And why should we hesitate to desire and expect forgiveness through it? If the death of Christ satisfies the offended justice of the high and holy One, ought it not to satisfy us and to assure us that "with the Lord there is mercy, and with our God plenteous redemption?" Who can conceive the infinitude of love that is hid in the atonement of the blessed Jesus? Angels in the loftiest range of their intellectual powers, cannot grasp it. "It passeth knowledge." Believe we this? Then may the every individnal believer amongst us bow with heedful and delighted attention his ear to the voice which says—"Deliver him from going down into the pit; for I have found a ransom."[h]

Again; *Would we have our sins subdued?* Let us stand by *the cross of Jesus.* We know full well what it is to have been led captive by the Devil at his will. Perhaps even now sin has often times dominion over us. Corruption is prevalent and grace decays.

[e] Rom iii, 25. [f] John x, 11. [g] Acts xiii, 38.
[h] Job xxxiii, 24.

But, let us realize the woe of Gethsemane and the cross of Calvary. Let us see with what agony and tears and blood our Jesus strove to deliver us from "the Law of sin and death, and to bring us under a Dispensation of grace and mercy. In the recollection of the cross, let us remember the promise, "I will subdue all thine enemies."[i] There is with him "a power whereby He is *able even to subdue all things* to himself."[k] Our will, our mind, memory, and imagination, he can bring into sweet and entire subserviency. And nothing will so effectually loosen "the bands of wickedness," as contemplation on the cross. 'You must resolve against sin,' would many say; 'and do your utmost to overcome it.' Resolve against sin we should; but never shall we overcome it but by the blood of the Lamb.[l] It is *that* which cleanseth from the guilt and rescueth from the power of sin. In view of a bleeding Saviour, we shall become pure and holy. His cross will make us virtuous and moral, and while we stand thereby, with assurance of faith may we pray this prayer—"Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."[m] In this way may "Holiness to the Lord" characterise every really gracious disciple of the holy Jesus.

I ask, moreover, *Would we be softened into penitential sorrow?* Would we feel that tenderness of spirit which brings with it its own peculiar and delightful solace? Let us stand by *the cross of Jesus*. Oh! it is sweet to feel the meltings of a grateful tenderness at the feet of Jesus. This is promised to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.[n] How

[i] 1 Chron. xvii, 10. [k] Phil. iii, 21. [l] Rev. xii, 11.
[m] Micah vii, 18. 19. [n] Zech xii, 10.

were the sensibilities of the Marys moved as they stood and mourned for him whom we have pierced! Sorrow for the sorrow of Jesus is true repentance. Many lament the consequences of sin in both themselves and others, but without any adequate sense of sin's exceeding sinfulness or any tenderness of spirit in the remembrance of a Saviour's cross and passion. It is natural to shrink from pain and to dread the occasion of it. It is not in nature to "be in bitterness for Jesus and to mourn for him as one mourneth for an only son." Tender-heartedness is learned at the cross When we can most feelingly enter into the condescending kindness, and the dying love of Christ, then shall we ourselves be most truly kind, tender, and affectionate. Our mercy towards each other will resemble the mercy of God towards us all. That is emphatically "tender:"[o] and happy are we if, from the cross of God's beloved Son, we have acquired a pitiful, compassionate, contrite, and lowly temper.

Further: *Would we preserve ease and peacefulness of mind?* Let us stand by *the cross of Jesus.* Legal fears, recollected or repeated sins; failures in duty; continued consciousness of imperfection; to which may be added, also, outward and temporal cares; family bereavements, and all the various ills that mark an unrighteous world, will frequently disturb our quiet, and interrupt the mind's placidity. Now, nothing will so effectually quell the mental strife as meditation on the death of Christ. Wild may be the war of conflicting opinions, and contrariety may pervade all human schemes and devisings; but, "Thou wilt keep him (may the Christian believer, appealing to his Saviour-God, exclaim,) in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.—Trust ye, then, in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."[p] His strength is rock: all is sand beside. When sensible of our frailty; when weary of the world's unmeaning converse

[o] Luke i, 78. [p] Isa. xxvi, 3. 4.

and disgusted with its shallow and formal friendships; when mournful because, perhaps, one dear to us as our own souls is lost to us; or, in fine, when any of the various ills to which humanity is liable press sore upon us, let us "look unto Jesus." The influence of his cross will benignly tranquillize our perturbed spirits. Armed with the same mind that was in our Lord, the radiancy of hope will cheer the gloom of our passing trouble; and beyond the cross on which we gaze, we shall perceive a world "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest"—where tears shall be wiped away, and all shall be quietness and assurance for ever. It will commonly be found, on inquiry, that *then* are we the least composed and tranquil when most forgetful of Jesus and him crucified. Let experience then tend to induce us to "hold us fast by God." And when we find ourselves at a darkening distance from him, let us beware how we hesitate and delay to "arise and go to our Father." Many think to heal their backslidings by deeds and essays of their own, and by other means than the cross of Jesus to restore tranquillity and peace within them: this is wrong: an immediate and direct return to the Friend and Saviour of our souls should be determined on. As at the first "redemption—even the forgiveness of sins," was found in "the blood" of Christ, so must it ever be till we are without fault before the throne of God. It is here many, through their own hearts' simplicity or the mistaken advices of pretending teachers, oftentimes needlessly distress themselves, and perpetuate the anxieties of their minds. From the beginning to the consummation of our piety, the cross of Jesus must be both our peace restorer and preserver. By the blood of his cross hath Jesus made peace. Thereby we are called to peace; thereby we have peace; and thereby we regain peace when, through infirmity or temptations, we have lost it. "Peace then be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ," and may it "keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ!" for "By his stripes we are healed."

I would ask also, *Would we be crucified to the world?* Let us stand by *the cross of Jesus.* What was the world, either in its smiles or frowns, to Mary the mother of Jesus, to his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, or to Mary Magdalene? In the dying of their Lord, they seemed to die: temporal things were receding from their view, and all the invisibles of eternity were crowding round them. Would we it were thus with us? It is the cross of Jesus that alone can deaden our affections toward this world and waken our anticipations of another. Our old and sinful nature must be affixed to his cross to be crucified in its affections and lusts. Paul could say, "I am crucified;" but it was "with Christ;" and though he lived, yet it was not so much himself that lived, as Christ influencing his heart and subduing his heart's desires and thoughts for him and within him. When any feel it to be hard to give up some carnal pleasure or some worldly advantage that is not compatible with a professed subjection to Jesus Christ, let them inquire whether they recollect his cross? how lately they stood beside it? and whether they ought not cheerfully to sacrifice their all for him, who gave *himself* a sacrifice for them? Will the haunts of sinful dissipation be desired, if "the place where Jesus was crucified" be loved? Will "wages of iniquity," gains of unrighteousness, be coveted, in the believing recollection of him who "though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor?" Some indeed are wont in terms the most glowing and with an eloquence that for a moment fascinates and delights the ear, to describe the perishableness of the world, the vanity of its good, the uncertainty of its wealth, the necessity and excellence of self-denial, and the almost infinite amiableness of moral virtue: moved and won with all this "wisdom of words" may their hearers be, but their worldliness will remain uncured and there will be a return to all the love, the gaiety, the care, and sinfulness of the world again. And why? Because Jesus Christ is *not* evi-

dently set forth crucified among them. There is no mention of the cross. Though the vail of the Temple be rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the way into the holiest of all made accessible and plain, yet a vail remains unrent upon the mind of every natural man, and the way of truth does he not know. Hence (and solemn is the fact) "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness:" only "unto us which are saved it is the power of God."[9] By the foolishness, however, (and "the foolishness of God is wiser than men") of its preaching, God saves them that believe. And *its* preaching it is that will "crucify our old man with its deeds" and dispose us to affect things spiritual and eternal. Wonderful revolutions of sentiment and feeling does the cross effect; while "the wise and the scribe and the disputer of this world," see their wisdom nullified and their understanding brought to nought.

As by the light of opening day,
The stars are all conceal'd;
So earthly pleasures fade away,
When Jesus is reveal'd.

And as Jesus our Lord "endured the cross, despising its shame," *Would we take up our cross daily and follow him?* It is the cross that he endured which will enable us to do so. Let us, then, stand by *the cross of Jesus*. Let us mark its every varied suffering. See the Saviour bound and scourged. See him reviled and set at nought. Hear the taunts and mockeries of his enemies Observe how he faints beneath the wood whereto he is presently to be affixed with nails. "I thirst," says he: "gall mingled with vinegar" is given him to drink. "Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow?" Was ever innocence so caluminated? Was ever love so scorned? Was ever sin's malicious enmity to holiness so meekly borne? How truly was he "a reproach of men and despised

[9] 1 Cor. i, 18.

of the people !"[r] But this offended not the Marys; they stood by the cross of Jesus. "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp," stand by his cross, and bear his reproach.[s] A cross every faithful follower of Christ must take up. Fidelity to him must almost necessarily insure "persecution:" hence the Scripture so pointedly and undisguisedly declares, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus *shall* suffer persecution"[t] It is, confessedly, painful to endure the neglect and unkindness of friends: the more open and abusive virulence of foes, and all the many significant looks and pitiable expressions of some whom we even esteem, and whose souls we would fain win to our Lord. In, however, the contemplation of a Saviour's sorrows, our sorrows will be forgotten. When we think of the Jews saying—"Away with him, crucify him;" and stand by him as he hangs amidst the revilings of the multitude, O it will be quite possible meekly to suffer our names to be cast out as evil, and with Jesus to say, "This is *their* hour." *Our* hour will come: and when those feet that once were nailed to the cross shall tread the clouds of heaven, and those hands that once held a reed in mockery shall hold the scales of an unerring judgment, and those eyes that once were closed in death shall meet us brilliant with love and glory, then "shall our innocency appear clear as the light and our just dealing as the noon-day." "Father, forgive them," did Jesus cry? and shall we not "forgive every one his brother their trespasses? Let us rather "take wrong." Let us quell the every complaining of our heart with, 'Did not Jesus suffer?' "Therefore let *us* both labour and suffer reproach;" and "esteem" with Moses "the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt," or, could we even command it, the wealth of worlds.

Would we love our Lord? Let us *stand by his cross.* Boundless is the love we owe him. Infinitely

[r] Ps. 22. 6. [s] Heb. xiii, 13. [t] 2 Tim. iii, 12

below his desert do we esteem him. This we often feel, and it grieves us. Many persons sorely complain of their want of love to God:—'they do not love him as they would: and on this account they fear God does not love them.' Think of the cross: go, behold its woes and sorrows: Can you doubt the love of him whose blood streams from it? Why does he die? "for the joy set before him"—the joy of magnifying his Father's attributes, and rescuing immortal souls from death. "In his love and in his pity does he redeem us." Shall I be permitted to observe that herein, I think, we err? we look too much at our love to Jesus, and too little contemplate his love to us. Our love? what is it at most? A spark of affection amidst an ocean of ignorance and sin and folly. The love of Christ to us, what is it? A fathomless abyss—affection immeasurable as eternity. Now which, is it reasonable to suppose, will comfort us the most to think on, our love or his? Which carries along with it the brightest and most irresistible evidence of love; some deed of kindness which we may do a fellow man or the death of Christ for the redemption of a ruined world? Which should we then regard with most complacency? which should our thoughts revert to with the greatest frequency?—"Behold, says God, my servant whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth."[v] Let us obey this commandment. Surely if the mind of God himself delights so sensibly in his beloved Son, well may we delight ourselves in him. And whilst we thus behold our Lord, we shall be led to love him. The Spirit which testifies of him will "shed abroad his love in our hearts;" and without our being so solicitious about it, "the love of Christ (whether in this expression his love to us or our's to him, be meant) will constrain us; and we shall thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should

[v] Isaiah xlii, 1.

not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for him and rose again."[w]

Finally, *Would we go down at once with resigned tranquillity and cheerful hope into our grave?* Let us stand by *the cross of Jesus.* Be situated where we may, and however luxuriantly our Garden may smile around us, there is in it a sepulchre, which we must all one day tenant. The grave is appointed for all living: if we descend into it from mount Calvary, we shall find it spoiled of terror. Jesus hath vanquished the principalities and powers of darkness, and triumphed over them openly in his cross. To his cross he nailed—as abrogated and annulled, "the handwriting that was against us and contrary to us" and to our safety.[x] In brief, Jesus "hath destroyed death by destroying him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil." "Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel." Immutable promises secure that life with its immortal blessedness to all who glory only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The shame which he endured procures us honour. His thorny crown procures us diadems of beauty. His death procures us life. Renewed after his image and made like-minded with our Lord, our's will be successively the cross, the grave, the skies. There is but one short step—a little pause—between mount Calvary and Heaven. Those who, with the mother of Jesus, his mother's sister, and Mary Magdalene, stand by the Saviour's cross, are ripening fast for the throne and kingdom of the Saviour's glory. And those who sung when Jesus rose, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in;" will sing the same jubilant and triumphant strain on every new accession of number to the hosts of the redeemed: for "Where I am, there shall also my servants be," is the promise of Jesus Christ, and if angels rejoiced over us

[w] 2 Cor. v, 14. 15. [x] Col. ii, 14.

when penitent, and ministered to us when heirs of salvation, we cannot suppose their joy and gratulation on our behalf to cease when our souls, with their garments washed in the blood of the Lamb, are about to join their choir, and to enter on the unalienable possession of their goodly heritage. O no! they will rather swell our halleluias and lead us—not to a cross where hangs our soul's Beloved in agony and blood—but to a throne whereon he sits in a dazzling and uncreated majesty—"the Lord mighty in battle"—the Lord who loved us even unto death—the Lord who subdued our enemies within us and without us—the Lord who drew us to himself—disposed us to love *his* cross and enabled us to sustain our own—the Lord who swayed over us a kind and gracious Sceptre, and in whose presence and approval we are now to find our rest, our heaven, our all.

NOTE.

If the following Hymn, selected from the Hymn-Book of the United Brethren's Protestant Episcopal Church, tends to recommend that very devotional Manual of Christian Poetry to the Reader's notice, the end of its insertion here will be answered. It forms the 85th of the Collection, and is translated from the German:—

I.

O HEAD so full of bruises,
So full of pain and scorn,
'Midst other sore abuses
Mock'd with a crown of thorn!
O head ere now surrounded
With brightest Majesty,
In death now bow'd and wounded!
Saluted be by me.

II.

Thou countenance transcendent,
Thou life-creating Sun
To worlds on thee dependent;
Now bruis'd and spit upon!
How art thou grown so sallow!
How are those gracious eyes,
Whose radiance knew no fellow,
Clouded in cruel wise!

III.

Thy cheeks, through heavy dolor,
Are marr'd, fall'n, and wan;
Thy lips, depriv'd of color,
Spoke heav'nly truth to man;
Thy body, ah! how wasted,
Death's horror did reduce
Thy strength, and quite exhausted
Each drop of vital juice.

IV.

O Lord, what thee tormented,
Was my sin's heavy load!
I had the debt augmented
Which thou didst pay in blood:
Here am I, blushing sinner,
On whom wrath ought to light;
O thou my health's beginner!
Let thy grace cheer my sight.

V.

Own me, Lord, my Preserver,
My Shepherd, me receive;
I know thy love's strong fervor
By all thy pain and grief.
Thou richly hast supplied
My soul with heav'nly food,
For which I've often sighed,
Thy holy flesh and blood.

VI.

I'll here with thee continue,
(Though poor, despise me not)
I'm one of thy retinue:
As were I on the spot,
When, earning my election,
Thy heart-strings broke in death;
With shame and love's affection
I'll watch thy latest breath.

VII.

O what a consolation
Doth in my heart take place,
When I thy toil and passion
Can in some measure trace;
Ah! should I, while thus musing
On my Redeemer's cross,
E'en life itself be losing,
Great gain would be that loss.

VIII.

I give thee thanks unfeigned,
O Jesus! Friend in need!
For what thy soul sustained
When thou for me didst bleed:
Grant me to lean unshaken
Upon thy faithfulness,
Until from hence I'm taken
To see thee face to face.

IX.

Lord, at my dissolution
Do not from me depart,
Support, at the conclusion
Of life, my fainting heart;
And when I pine and languish,
Seiz'd with death's agony,
O by thy pain and anguish
Set me at liberty.

X.

Lord, grant me thy protection,
Remind me of thy death
And glorious resurrection,
When I resign my breath:
Ah then, though I be dying,
'Midst sickness, grief, and pain,
I shall on thee relying
Eternal life obtain.

DISCOURSE XXXI.

THE BARREN FIG TREE

Luke xiii, 6—9.

He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

This passage of holy Writ is called a parable. A parable is a kind of figurative speech, in which one thing is said and another thing is meant. To teach by parable was the usual mode of instruction among the wise men of the East. They taught thus to excite inquiry in the minds of their hearers, and when their hearers could not thoroughly comprehend what was said, they would come to their teachers to be informed. Thus it was with our Lord and his disciples. Jesus spake many things unto them by parables, and without a parable, particularly in the earlier stages of his Ministry, spake he not unto them: and those of you who are conversant with the Gospel history will recollect how often the disciples came subsequently to Jesus, saying, "Explain to us such and such a parable."

Now, my Brethren, Jesus Christ yet speaks in his written Word, and therein he speaks to us also by parables: but need we not often Philip's question to the Treasurer of the Ethiopian Queen to be put to us—"Understandest thou what thou readest?" We hear and read the sayings of Jesus Christ; but truly may we say, like some of old, "We cannot tell what he saith." And why is this? It is because we do not pray, "Lord, open to us this parable: Open thou our eyes that we may see the wondrous things of thy Word." We do not sit with seriousness, with thought, with prayer, over our Bibles, and therefore the Bible is a sealed book to us. Your presence, however, indicates, I would fain believe, a wish to know what the parable before us means, and we will now proceed to notice, in regular succession, its several incidents.

And, first of all, we notice *a vineyard*, wherein a certain man had a fig-tree planted. As amongst ourselves, gardens and orchards abound; so in the hill country of Judea, vineyards abounded. The goodly boughs of the vine were wont gracefully to overshadow and adorn the heights of that once favoured land. We may readily suppose the planter of a vineyard to feel a peculiar interest in the work of his hands. How patiently would he wait for the pleasant fruit! how carefully would he prop the tender branches! and when some among his many vines were waxen old, how kindly would he screen them from the stormy wind and tempest! Behold here a picture of the Church of God. "Ye are God's husbandry," ye are God's vineyard, and therein, though "wild by nature," hath it pleased the Heavenly Husbandman to plant you. By baptism are we admitted into the visible Church of Christ. Therein we stand as trees which the Lord's right hand hath planted. Whilst the millions of mankind are growing in the wilds and deserts of heathen ignorance and superstitious folly, it is our's to dwell in a Christian country, to belong to a Christian community, to bask in the bright and ever bright-

ening beams of mercy and truth, and to be (at least nominally and professionally) "the vineyard of the Lord of hosts."

We notice now *the Owner's inspection* of his vineyard. "He came," we read, into his vineyard. Which of us, possessing a garden, does not occasionally come into it? pass inquiringly from one part of it to another? from one tree to another? from one herb to another? Do we not so especially when "the winter is past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear in the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land? when the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell?"[a] In like manner does God inspect his Church; nor is there a single individual member of it upon whom his watchful and inquiring eye does not rest. He knows us altogether. He is amongst us now. At this moment is the Lord God walking among the trees of his Garden: and, but for our sin which we contracted in the fall of Adam, and have since committed in ourselves, we should hear the voice of the Lord God, and be willing that in the cool of every day he should come into his vineyard and mark our growth in grace and in the knowledge of his Son. But, although we see him not, "God is, nevertheless, in this place." "His eye beholds and his eyelids try the children of men." He passes now from one of us to another, and with a scrutiny the most exact and penetrating does he inspect the thoughts of every heart amongst us. He marks the tree which may have weathered the storms of a century's better half, and observes the suckling beneath its shade, and from both does he expect its proper and its seasonable fruit. He comes seeking fruit; he comes, if haply he may find in us any thing corresponding with his forbearance and goodness towards us.

[a] Cant. ii, 11—13.

We in the next place notice *the discovery of the barren tree.* The planter came into his vineyard seeking fruit on the fig-tree he had planted there; but found none. We, perhaps, go into our garden and amid the rich luxuriance that prevails around us, we see a tree which puts not forth its buds: no bursting germs bespeak a fulness of blossom or waken anticipation of future fruitfulness. We remember, it may be, that last year it bore us little or nothing, and now there is still less probability of its bearing. We may have digged about it and dressed it: yea, and because it was a barren tree we may have taken the more pains with it to make it fruitful. But, alas! after all our labour, the tree is barren still. Who of us all may not behold in this worthless plant the semblance of himself? O how has our most gracious Planter and Keeper cared for us! how has he watered us with the dew of his blessing! how has he comforted us on every side! how has he beamed forth in the face of Jesus Christ with beseeching tenderness upon us! how has he dressed us, warned us, threatened and caressed us! In what a fruitful hill has he planted us! How, too, has he gathered up and removed all the opposing difficulties that barred our access to himself and hindered our fruitfulness in his ways! Justly may God appeal to ourselves and say, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"[b] What indeed? And yet, O yet, after all he is constrained to say, "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this tree and find none." And may I not ask, Has God come to many a one of us seeking the fruits of penitence and faith and love these *three years* ONLY? *We* should think three years a long time to wait for the budding of a tree: but, O the marvellous longsuffering of our God! he has come these ten, twenty, thirty, forty, and even fifty years seeking fruit on some of us, and yet found none. Now again he

[b] Isa. v, 4.

comes and finds us barren still. Is there not one and another to whom I speak that is discovered to himself to be the barren tree? All nature revives at the bidding of its Lord: Summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, come and go in regular and beautiful succession, and you remain still the same. Fruits, you will say, you bear: Yes; but while you are apart from God and unreconciled to him through the death of his Son—while you know nothing of union with Christ, and the Spirit's quickening agency, your fruits can only be sour grapes—grapes of which no use can be made, and in which God can take no delight. Unregenerate nature is in every person and in every age what Moses told the Israelites they were—"the vine of Sodom."[c] And the vine of Sodom will not be found to produce the grapes of Eschol. Hence, notwithstanding all the boasted fruitfulness of the natural man, he is in fact the barren fig-tree still. "Israel is an empty vine; he bringeth forth fruit to himself."[d]

Let us, in the next place, notice *the Owner's determination respecting it.* We see he determined to "cut it down." Now, what if we had come three years successively into our Garden, and found that year after year some favourite plant was dried up and withered, or, at most, that our tree bore us only leaves and fruits of a very inferior quality and useless kind? What should we feel towards it? What should we think? Should we not probably say in our heart, 'I'll cut this tree down or pluck it up: it is no use here: it does but cumber the ground and occupy the room of a better and a more fruitful plant?' Would not this be our reasoning? Then such is God's determination respecting every tree in his vineyard that bears him no fruit. Why, he asks, cumbereth it the ground? Will it after years of barrenness bear any thing agreeable to my will? Will it not rather, after all I have done or could do for it, remain the same? Cut it,

[c] Deut. xxxii, 32. [d] Hos. x, 1.

therefore, down: Cut it down, my servant: Dress it no more: Let it alone: Let it alone my Spirit; no longer strive with it: Let it alone my Minister; no longer warn, beseech, and threaten it: Let it alone Conscience; no more do thou require repentance, faith in the Gospel of Jesus, and works that shall evidence that faith's reality: *Cut it down*, and as the tree falls, so let it lie. Such is the Owner's determination respecting the barren fig-tree: but, O Beloved, "we have an Advocate with the Father," and we therefore proceed to notice

The intercession made for the barren fig-tree: "Lord," says the Dresser of the vineyard, "let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it"—use other and more abundant means with it, in order, if possible, to induce fruitfulness. Let us suppose ourselves walking in a Garden in company with a friend: As we pass along, we come to a vine that bears us nothing, or to a tree that we deem worthless—a mere cumberer of the ground. We say to our friend, 'I mean to cut this tree down: it is little use to me here: it will afford fuel for the fire.' Our friend looks and inspects the tree, and says, 'Let it be for a while, another year or so: I'll dress it: it is not quite dead: there are a few buds: perhaps there may be blossoms and fruits in them: the tree is youthful; it has not seen so many summers yet as others of its fellows may have done; perhaps, after all the care and labour lost upon, it will bear.' What, my Brethren, would this be? Would it not be *intercession* for the barren-tree? Then just so do your Ministers intercede for you. As the Dressers of Jehovah's Vineyard, we cry, Lord, let our barren trees alone: Spare them yet another year, till we shall more abundantly have laboured for them. But, more than all, does the one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, stay the up-lifted arm that might justly fell us and procure us space for repentance. Yes, O ye, who cumber

the ground of the Church, Jesus maketh intercession for you. Therefore it is that God is so longsuffering to you-ward. For his sake is another hour, another day, another year, added to your fruitless and mispent lives. The nature of the corrupt tree may hence through forbearing kindness and tender mercy, yet be changed. O that the Spirit's new-creating energy may move in the means, and make the means of conversion effectual for their end! But, remember, ye hitherto unfruitful professors of the Christian name, your day of reprieve is on the wing. What though you be spared "another year?" that year will close, and how know you that ye shall see its termination? The axe of righteous indignation may smite your root ere another day is added to your life. Many are already smitten. Saw you never a tree cut down even in the prime and vigour of its strength? Think as you pass along the adjoining yard how many a tree, once young and bidding fair to bring forth fruit as any among yourselves, lies scattered there: And why are you not numbered with the fallen dead? Why, as cumberers of the ground whereon you stand, are ye not cut down? O why? Because Jesus "liveth to make intercession for us;" and you are spared, if haply in the use of gracious means ye may bring forth the fruits of a holy and a religious life. But if, after all, the barren tree continue barren still, we must notice lastly

The final resolve of its Owner should it continue unfruitful. "If it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." Would it not gratify any one of us to see a tree that we had taken much care to cultivate, and which we once thought to be dead or dying, bud forth anew, and in due season repay our labour and toil on its account, by yielding fruit? Just so, Jesus Chrit says it should be well if even after years of barrenness, we produced the fruits of grace. Unspeakably well would it be with us. There would be joy in heaven over a sinner that re-

pented after fifty, sixty, or even eighty years hardihood in sin, aversion to God, contempt of his Word, and disobedience to it. Jesus would see of the travail of his soul, and deem himself compensated for all his sorrows and for all his labours, by the fruitfulness of faith in a converted sinner. The Holy Spirit would joy to qualify and meeten such an one for glory. The riches of God's grace would be exceedingly magnified in him. Our desert world would possess in him another whose deed of kindness should cheer and bless it. Well it should be with him, and no more should it be said "The vine is dried up and the fig-tree languisheth."[e] But if our remaining days be idled away; if notwithstanding all our means of knowledge and improvement; if *after all,* "evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, laciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness," do still proceed from within and come out of a man's heart, then after that, he shall be cut down.[f] Both the Righteous and their Lord shall approve the judgment. The interceding Saviour himself will say to his eternal Father—"Cut him down." The deadly presence and the noxious shade of the wicked man shall not always darken and deform the Church of God. God will thoroughly rid his Church of all but trees of righteousness. A name to live where deadliness of soul is dominant, will not preserve us. The leaves of mere profession will not abide the scrutiny of God: nothing short of vital, deep-rooted, and heart-felt godliness will satisfy him. Those there are who (as the Prophet remarks) seem to bear "two or three berries on the outtermost bough"—just fruit enough to catch the eye of a passing stranger, who yet must rank among the barren trees: for, come to the innermost branches—come to the feelings, the affections, and the desires of the soul, and alas! what barrenness of love to Jesus, what barrenness of joy and peace

[e] Joel i, 12. [f] Mark vii, 21—23.

in believing, what barrenness, in short, of Christian principle and Christian experience, will you find! Alas! we fear that many a blooming and yet fruitless professor will come down. As children of sinful Adam, we are all "turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine:"[g] unless we become regenerate all our fruits will be sour and nauseous: and cut down shall we certainly be if we live and die unchanged. And what, let me ask you, what would you do with a dead and worthless tree which you might fell in your garden? To what purpose would you most probably apply it? Would you not deem it fit for your fire, and use it as a fire-material? And does not Jesus say, "Bring hither these mine enemies that would not I should reign over them, and slay them—hew them in pieces—before my face?" And will he not moreover add, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels?" Thus you see the barren fig-tree that will ultimately, after all the favour shewn to it, be found barren still, will be deemed fuel for the fire: and "who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"[h] "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire;"[i] but "who shall stand when God doeth this?"

Such is the Parable: and now we have noticed the vineyard wherein a certain man planted a fig tree: the Owner's inspection of it: the discovery of the barren tree: the Owner's determination respecting it: the intercession made for it; and the final resolve of its Owner should it continue unfruitful: the DESIGN with which Jesus spake this Parable may very properly furnish us with some closing remarks.

At a particular season some there were who told our Lord of the Galilæans whose blood Pilate had unjustly shed while they were worshipping with sacri-

[g] Jer. ii, 21. [h] Isa. xxxiii, 14. [i] Matt. iii, 10.

fice in the Temple. "Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans because they suffered such things? I tell you, *Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Our Lord then further alludes to a circumstance which had happened at Jerusalem and whereby eighteen persons were deprived suddenly of their lives. He then asks again, "Think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: (and again does Jesus solemnly repeat) but, *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*" And the more powerfully to impress the necessity of repentance on the mind of his audience, "he spake *also this parable*" which we have just considered. The design, therefore, of the parable is evidently to inculcate a great moral and spiritual change—a repentance originating in the heart and diffused in its effects through all the outer conduct. The use we should make of others' sufferings is—not to judge and to condemn the sufferers as though they were guiltier and more sinful than ourselves; but to examine our own lives, and by a speedy repentance and a timely humiliation of soul to prevent our own destruction. Jesus advises each one of us all to look to himself: for repentance is the only means whereby to avert the punishment which individually we deserve. Unless we repent, we must perish. Let us, then, consider our ways. Let us think how much and long we have been privileged with means and ordinances: how often we have been dug about and dressed: and how many a year, notwithstanding, we have been found fruitless and barren. A people's continued unfruitfulness under ministerial care and culture, damps, in time, ministerial intercession for them. God is provoked to bring his judgments unavoidably upon them. Then "repent ye and believe the Gospel." Say ye, 'We cannot change our own hearts?' True; you cannot: but "is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Say ye again, 'Our hearts are hard and insensible: we can-

not feel as we desire and wish we could.' They may be, and harder than the stones ye tread upon: but, "I will take the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh," is God's most gracious promise. Say ye further, 'We cannot cease from sin: we are tempted and overcome.' Did you ever try or do you try to cease from sin? In whose strength do you essay to do so? Go ye not voluntarily into temptation? Can we marvel then that sin should have dominion over you? Your strength is weakness: but, if, like the stripling David, you will go forth in the Name of the Lord of hosts, Goliaths great and powerful soever as they may be, shall fall before you. Cease from sin you *must:* Changed in spirit and disposition you *must* be: If ye have grown grey headed in the vineyard of the Lord, and be still void of spiritual fruits, ye must be altered men, or the Lord will cut you down. Say I this of myself? It is the loving Friend of publicans and sinners who says, "Except ye repent, ye shall perish:" "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."[1] Deep and solemn is the import of the word—*conversion.* It means no less than a corrupt tree's becoming a good tree. The very nature of the tree must be changed. In vain shall we look for grapes from a thorn, or figs from a thistle. There must be a renovation of the inner man, a recreation of light, knowledge, taste, affection, aim, and hope within us. *Wild* we are by nature, as St. Paul remarks: our natural fruits at best are poor, and 'we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.' We must then be gathered off our own stock and grafted anew. Jesus is the "true vine:" and to resemble him, we must be partakers of his nature. Through union and communion with him, we must receive out of his fulness. His Spirit's fruits can only appear where his Spirit operates. "The righteous (and who can be *righteous* but as justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified

[1] Matt. xviii, 3.

by the Spirit of our God) shall flourish as a palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."[k] Then pray ye for the converting and renewing grace of the Spirit. Your branches shall then unfold, and your boughs be laden with fruits "holy and acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Your beauty shall be stately and majestic as the olive tree, and your smell fragrant and odorous as Lebanon.[l] Israel shall no longer bring forth fruit to himself: *himself* shall be humble, contrite, and meek: his Lord alone shall be exalted, because from *him* is his fruit found. And never will that Lord cut down a soul that loves and serves him: never shall a believer in Jesus become fuel for the devouring fire: never shall the penitential sorrow that issues in conversion be aggravated by the gnawing of the worm that dieth not and the fury of the fire that is not quenched. When the angel of God shall obey the mandate, "Thrust in thy sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe"—no humble and forgiven sinner shall be gathered into the winepress of the wrath of God.[m] Let this encourage the most graceless and fruitless soul among you to repent. I trust he to whom your hearts are open, sees it to be the rising purpose of your soul to go and with persevering earnestness to beg him to dig about you and to dress you, to spare you yet another year and in his love to save you. O if you knew your danger as a fruitless tree, you would know something of God's forbearing mercy towards you. If ye *felt* your barrenness, you would be filled with wonder and amazement to find yourselves spared and preserved so long. O that ye may yet become "a noble vine!"[n] May the Lord pity your desolations! "Return, we beseech

[k] Ps. 92. 12—14. [l] Hos. xiv. 6. [m] Rev. xiv, 18. 19.
[n] Jer. ii. 21.

thee, O God of hosts; Look down from Heaven, behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch which thou madest strong for thyself."[o] Brought out of Egypt, and planted in the Canaan of the Christian Church, may ye eventually be planted in the holier happier climes of Heaven, and through the untold ages of eternity be adducing still more and more abundantly the fruits of righteousness and praise! "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly—even proportioned to your fervour, watchfulness, and fruitfulness—into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."[p] To him, as "the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

[o] Ps. 80. 14—15. [p] 2 Pet. i. 5—11.

DISCOURSE XXXII.

SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE.

Zechariah iv, 6.

Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.

The Jews had been captives in Babylon. The years, however, wherein they were to suffer adversity, were passed away. A decree was issued permitting their return to Canaan. When returned to the land of their fathers, they began to build anew their once glorious but now fallen and desolate Temple. Its foundation was laid amidst the tears of some who remembered the grandeur of the former Building and the joyous acclamations of others to whom that grandeur was unknown.[a] The builders, it appears, proceeded but tardily in their work. They grew weary of it, (so prone alas! is man to weariness in well-doing) and even excused their negligence, saying, "The time is not come, the time that the house of the Lord should be built." To reprove them came "the word of the Lord by Haggai, the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house to lie waste?" The people trembled at the Prophet's word, and "came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God."[b] And still further to encourage

[a] Ezra iii, 10—13. [b] Hag. i chap.

their prosecution of the work, Haggai is again commissioned to announce the advent of Messiah as "The Desire of all nations" and to declare, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts."[c] To Haggai succeeded Zechariah in the prophetical office. To the daughter of Zion, Zechariah says, "Sing and rejoice; for, lo, I come; and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord." And inasmuch as the Jews builded the Temple only as they were supernaturally influenced and encouraged to do so, the whole glory of the work would exclusively pertain to God, and on this no less than on every similar occasion, "his own arm would bring salvation to him: "This, therefore, is the word of the Lord by Zechariah the prophet, unto Zerubbabel, saying, *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts:*" that is, not by the might or the power of man, should the house of God be builded; but, by the powerful and efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit.

And thus it is with God's *spiritual* house—"whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."[d] We do not naturally affect union with Christ or with each other in him: yea, rather, we are naturally averse to "build upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, and on Jesus Christ as being himself the chief corner stone." Not therefore by might nor by power in ourselves, shall we ever "be fitly framed together or grow unto an holy temple in the Lord." No: If ever we be "builded together for an habitation of God," it must be "*through the Spirit.*"[e] And if we be builded together as "the church of the living God" through the agency of the eternal Spirit, the whole glory of the work will accrue to its divine and gracious Agent, and it will be found that though "every house is builded by some man or instrument, yet he that buildeth all

[c] Hag. ii, 8. 9. [d] Heb. iii, 6. [e] Eph ii. 20—22.

things is God."[f] "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

Our subject, then, you perceive is *Spiritual Influence*. It is, confessedly, a subject of a mysterious kind, and one requiring to be handled with modest deference and scriptural judgment: nevertheless, it is a subject also of a very delightful kind, and one involving the most essential ingredients of experimental piety. In further discoursing on Spiritual Influence, we shall endeavour to shew its *necessity*, its *nature*, and its *evidence*.

And I. Its *necessity*.

That spiritual influence on the human mind is necessary, will, we conceive, abundantly appear from the following statements.

"God made man upright:" "in the image of God created he man:" and so nearly did man resemble his Almighty Maker that his Maker himself took pleasure in the contemplation of his creature's excellence. Man was holy, and therefore happy. In near and sweet communion with his Lord did he live. All his powers were subservient to his will, and *his* will was in entire and grateful unison with God's will. From this state of exalted blessedness, man, beguiled by the subtlety of Satan, fell; and in falling lost the image in which he was created, and became an alien and an outcast from the Divine presence and favour. 'Thereby it came to pass that as before he was blessed, so now he was accursed; as before he was loved, so now he was abhorred; as before he was most beautiful and precious, so now he was most vile and wretched in the sight of his Lord and Maker: instead of the image of God, he was now become the image of the Devil; instead of the citizen of heaven, he was become the bond-slave of hell, having in himself no one part of his former purity and cleanness, but being altogether

[f] Heb. iii, 4.

spotted and defiled; insomuch that now he seemed to be nothing else but a lump of sin, and therefore by the just judgment of God was condemned to everlasting death'* Hence originates the aversion which man's sinful nature feels to a pure and holy God. Union betwixt holiness and sin, there cannot be. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be."[g] This enmity against God marks the state of every child of sinful Adam. As is the root, such must the branches be: as is the fountain, correspondent to it must be the streams that issue from it. We are conceived and born in sin; and till we are "born again," we are utterly incapable of renewed communion with our God. Is there, then, no necessity for Spiritual or supernatural influence? Is there power or might in us whereby we can, alone and unassisted, overcome our hatred of holiness and our love of sin? Who shall take us away the impediment that bars our willing access unto God, and hinders a sincere and cordial delight in all his righteous will?—"Not by might, nor by power; but, by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

But, let us be somewhat more particular. Whence, I would ask, come all the ambitious rivalries, the envious strifes, the unjust dealings, the cruel oppressions, which abound in almost every period and country of the world? "Come they not hence, even of the lusts, that war in our members?"[h] And can any thing short of Almighty Agency controul those lusts, and and renovate the passions and propensities of human nature? Men may boast of the freedom of their will; but the will, in whatever respects it may be free, is

* Homily on the Nativity. O how earnestly to be wished it is that this Doctrine and its consequences were preached in every pulpit of our Land! What a happy revolution of sentiment and manner might we not see! Surely it would gladden the very spirits of our sainted fathers.

[g] Rom. viii. 7. [h] James iv. 1.

disinclined to good and powerless to perform it. To "choose the good and to refuse the evil," we readily admit to be our duty: but where is our inclination and our ability to do so? As well and with equal success may we attempt the practice of holiness without "a new heart and a right spirit," as the children of Israel make brick without material for so doing.[i] And who save the one infinitely wise and powerful Creator, can renew the heart and recreate its principles? To *create* is the prerogative of Deity: "not by power, therefore, or might," in ourselves can we be "created anew," and made "lively stones" in the "living temple" of our God; but, "by my Sprit, saith the Lord of hosts."

"Wherefore, then, it will be said, serveth the Law?" What is its use? Wherefore was it given? "It was added, we answer, because of transgressions."[k] "The Law is not made for a righteous man but for the lawless, and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane," for, in short, any species of offender, and on account of any departure in moral principle and conduct from the perfect will of God.[l] The very existence of a written Law implies man's depravity and weakness. "Where no Law is, there is no transgression:"[m] and where transgression is, the Law discovers it;[n] yea, the Law entered that the offence might abound,"[o] and the whole world of mankind be shewn its guiltiness before God. Now with all our pretended regard to morality, and all our deference to the Commandments, we feel, if we will candidly confess it, utterly incompetent to fulfil the Law: its spirituality we are averse to: its strict requirements offend us; and there are not wanting seasons in our intellectual being when we would fain pluck the Lawgiver from the throne of his high authority, and in the angry rebellion of our unhumbled heart, remodel the

[i] Exod. v, 7, 8. [k] Gal. iii, 19. [l] 1 Tim. i, 9.
[m] Rom. iv, 15. [n] Ib. iii, 20. [o] Ib. v, 20.

Law which he has promulged agreeably to our own wishes and abilities. In truth, this is actually done by those who view the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a remedial Law, teach a conditionary justification, and require a sincere obedience in order to our acceptance and forgiveness. But cordial delight in the Law as "holy, just, and good," there can be none without a gratuitous pardon and a conscious freedom from condemnation; nothing need we to recommend us to a Saviour, and no obedience whatever of our's avails for our forgiveness and acceptance. God "justifieth the ungodly," and "the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus maketh us free from the Law of sin and death:" and now is "the righteousness of the Law fulfilled" in those who confide simply in the death of God's beloved Son as a sacrifice for sin, and "walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."[p] And how can the bias of the flesh be changed and a man become "spiritually minded" otherwise than by a spiritual influence upon him? With all the power and might he can command, may a man aim to keep the precepts of religion, but he will never really love them but "by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." We must be "partakers of the Divine nature" ere we can glory in its holiness.

Is it not, moreover, universally admitted that mankind can easily and readily set their affections on things below, whilst it is with painful difficulty they can send a single thought before them to the world of spirits? How freely can we think and care and toil for our mortal; how scarcely can we bestow any thing like becoming thought or carefulness or labour on our immortal part? Most certainly is it so—"we cannot see afar off." What concerns our temporal ease, honour, and comfort, we are quick to discern: the country where our Jesus reigns, and which is declared to be "very far off," and away

[p] Rom. viii, 2—4.

from sin, from suffering, and from all that characterizes our present tarrying place, we have no eyes to see. Now, "since the world began, was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one *born* blind."[q] Is there power in man to do so? If not, can any save the Lord the Spirit clear our mental vision, give to our soul spiritual discernment, and draw our heart with its conceivings and its desires heaven-ward? And without this holy and heaven-ward bias of affection, shall we be found fit for heaven when our clay tenement crumbles into dust? In all its faculties is the soul disordered. Its will, as we have before intimated, is averse to good and prone to evil. Its understanding is darkened. How strangely tenacious of vain and impure ideas, and how treacherously forgetful of those of a spiritual kind, is its memory! Does not its imagination revel in obscenity? Does not its conscience sleep or waken but to little purpose? Earthly and base are its desires. It knows not the Lord, nor cares to know him. It would form a God all-merciful and void of justice. Jesus Christ it would fain acknowledge not. Boastful of its own power and might, it looks not beyond itself for supernatural aid. The precious bloodshedding of the holy Jesus wins not its regard, and possibly the hallowing and renewing agency of the Holy Ghost affords it matter for mockery and scorn. Is there then, again I ask, no needs-be for Spiritual Influence? Can any less powerful Agent than the Spirit of God re-organize our faculties and adduce harmony, loveliness, and order, from all the confusion that prevails within us? Hewn from nature's rock, must we not be fashioned anew ere we can know a grateful and obedient union with the "elect and precious corner stone, the tried and sure foundation which God hath laid in Zion?"[r]

Men may pretend to moral excellence, and even to much liveliness and zeal in religious duty; but "not

[q] John ix, 32. [r] 1 Pet. ii, 5, 6.

by might nor by power" of their own can they attain to it. Various motives may induce propriety of conduct: Worldly policy; love of reputation; dread of Divine displeasure, and fear of an hereafter reckoning, all may do so. Witness the self-inflicted tortures and the painful privations of the heathen devotee: witness the seclusion, the maceration, the abstinence, and the penance of the popish monk. What strenuous efforts do they make to be, as they fondly imagine, holy: but all in vain: Man may be pleased for his approval's sake: God may be feared where he is not loved. A "voluntary humility" may feed our self-complacency. The world may be renounced in pretence whilst it is desired in the heart. "No evil thing," it may be, can be said of many, who yet know nothing of "joy in the Holy Ghost," and those "groanings" of the Spirit with which the Spirit maketh intercession for us.[s] Paul speaks of "joy before God," and Peter of "gladness and exceeding joy:"[t] this cannot be known till we can look up with some small measure, at least, of hope and assurance to God as reconciling us to himself in the person of Jesus Christ. We can "walk with God as dear children" only as "the Spirit itself beareth witness with (or to) our spirits that we are *indeed* his children." The power and might of man may go far in acquiring knowledge and correctness of outward deportment; but no one can savingly know the truth and be really holy, but as "taught of God" and sanctified by the Holy Ghost. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; and no man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him."[v] "No man can call Jesus, Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."[w] "He taketh of the things that are his and sheweth them unto us."[x] "His understanding is infinite."[y] "He searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God."[z] And therefore 'as

[s] Rom. viii, 26, and xiv. 17. [t] 1 Thess. iii, 9, and 1 Pet. iv, 13.
[v] Luke x, 22. [w] 1 Cor. xii, 3. [x] John xvi, 14.
[y] Ps. 147. 5. [z] 1 Cor. ii, 10.

for the works of the Spirit, the fruits of faith, charitable and godly motions, if a man have any at all in him, they proceed only of the Holy Ghost, who is the alone worker of our sanctification, and maketh us new men in Christ Jesus.'* "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

We might instance the commonly and plainly apparent inutility of ministerial labour; the unprofitableness of means, and a variety of similar circumstances, all tending to prove the necessity of Spiritual Influence: but that necessity is now, we conceive, fully established, and we therefore proceed to shew you

II. Its *nature:*

And here be it premised that we do not feel ourselves called upon to explain the mode or manner of the Spirit's influence on the mind. The existence of the fact is sufficient for our purpose. The Holy Ghost in his nature and operations our Church believes to be 'incomprehensible.'† He is "excellent in working, wonderful in counsel, and his footsteps are not known." And why need we desire to know them? We are contentedly ignorant of many things. How our own mind operates on our body, we know not. How the acorn contains in itself the germ of after life, and how that germ expands into the stately and luxurious tree, we know not. In like manner "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: *so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*"‡ Our spiritual being in its commencement, its progress, and its consummation, is mysterious: but 'the more it is hid from our understanding, the more ought it to move all men to wonder at the secret and

* Homily for Whitsunday.
† Athanasian Creed: which see.

‡ John iii, 8.

mighty working of God's Holy Spirit.' Of this we may be persuaded—the nature of the agency will correspond with the nature of the Agent. Now 'as to the Spirit's nature, it is altogether one with God the Father and God the Son; that is to say, spiritual, eternal, uncreated, almighty: yea, to be brief, the Spirit is God and Lord everlasting.' And correspondent to his high and essential excellence will be the holy Spirit's influence. The office he sustains in the economy of human redemption is infinitely glorious; and as the Justifier of Jesus and the Regenerator of the world, will he be infinitely and for ever glorified.

One other remark may be necessary ere we notice the nature of Spiritual Influence:—it is not *miraculous;* it is not, we mean, such an influence as enabled the Prophets to foretell future events—to conceive so sublimely and to express their conceptions so beautifully, as, from their Writings, we are sure they did: it is not, moreover, such an influence as enabled the Apostles and others in the earlier ages of Christianity, to acquire languages without previous study, to heal diseases by a touch, and to raise the dead with a word. Whatever may hereafter be when, as Isaiah says, the Church shall strengthen her stakes and lengthen her cords, and the millions of mankind shall be gathered within her pale, extraordinary or miraculous influence we do not now expect.* Influence only of an ordinary and a necessary kind do we contend for, and *that* only in an ordinary way and the use of ordinary means. Passive we may be in our regeneration by the Spirit of God; and the act of our regeneration may be involved in deep and wonderful mysteriousness, but it is when "asking for the way" and "waiting in the way,"

* Compare Joel ii, 28, 29 with Acts ii, 1—21, and it will appear that the promised outpouring of the Spirit was very partial on the day of Pentecost: those on whom the Spirit then came cannot possibly be the "all flesh" of which the promise is inclusive.

that the Lord "teacheth us his way" and "bringeth us to himself by a way that we know not"[b]

And now we are prepared more particularly to notice the nature of the Holy Spirit's influence. It is then, we first of all observe, *quickening* in its nature. "It is the Spirit that *quickeneth*."[c] The Gospel of Jesus is "the ministration of the Spirit."[d] Thereby it is that any are quickened who were dead in tresspasses and sins."[e] And the Spirit, as a sovereign Agent, "quickeneth whom he will." If we be "begotten again unto a lively hope," "of his own will begat he us by the Word of truth."[f] God may speak "once or twice," as an occasional thing, "in a dream or in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man, in slumberings upon the bed;" and that in order to "seal instruction on the heart, to withdraw man from his purpose, and to keep back his soul from the pit."[g] He may, too, by some sudden catastrophe or alarming providence, powerfully impress the human mind and effectually benefit it; but usually the Spirit operates by "the Word of truth," and it is certainly by "the Word of truth" that all religious principle and experience must ultimately be tried. *That* it is which we find called "the incorruptible seed,"[h] and wherefore is it so called? Because in its effects it liveth and abideth for ever. It unites us to "the last Adam," who, as "as a quickening Spirit," becomes the source of spiritual life to all his believing members. Thus are we, together with our Lord, "put to death in the flesh and quickened by the Spirit:"[i] and unspeakably happy is it for the man who with Israel's sweet singer can truly say, "*Thy Word hath quickened me.*"[k] Such an one is a living member of "the true Tabernacle"—the Tabernacle which "the Lord

[b] Jer. l, 5. Isa. xxvi, 8. Ib. xlii, 16. and Ps. 25. 9.
[c] 2 Cor. iii, 6. [d] 2 Cor. iii, 8. [e] Eph. ii, 1.
[f] 1 Pet. i, 3. James i, 18. [g] Job. xxxiii, 16—18.
[h] 1 Pet. i, 23. [i] 1 Pet. iii, 18. [k] Ps. 119. 50.

pitched and not man."[l] And as often as he prays, "Quicken me in thy way," shall the Spirit's quickening influence invigorate and strengthen him anew.

That influence is, moreover, *enlightening* in its nature. The human mind is surprisingly inapprehensive of spiritual things. But why need we say *surprisingly* so? Walk we not naturally "in the vanity of our minds?" Is not our "understanding naturally darkened? and are we not alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our heart?"[m] Experience corroborates our assumption. It is a painful fact that endowments of the rarest kind, talents of the most splendid and commanding order, may be possessed, and yet their envied possessor may be "alienated from the life of God," ignorant of the things of God, reluctant to receive and slow to apprehend them; and although, it may be, familiar with "all knowledge and all mysteries," yet blindness remains upon the mental vision, and he knows not God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Now where the Spirit quickens, he enlightens. Where all worldly science fails, "he commandeth and it is done." And as the Word empowered by him quickens when dead, so by him are our understandings opened to understand the Scriptures. Truth then acquires a radiancy and a glory never discerned before. Once "we saw men as trees walking"—things were invisible or but dimly seen: now we "see all things clearly."[n] Full, mighty, and powerful were we wont to wield the sword of argument and to maintain our own opinion: now our every lofty imagination is brought low, and we confessedly admit, that not by might nor by power of human intellect can we obtain a knowledge of the Truth, but only by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts.

That Spirit's influence is also *renewing* in its nature, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done,

[l] Heb. viii, 2. [m] Eph. iv, 17, 18. [n] Mark viii, 25.

but according to his mercy, God saveth us, by the washing of regeneration, *and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*"[o] The impartation of life to the soul is a work perfect and complete in itself: but the developement of the new man's faculties and powers is gradual and progressive. Quickened we may be certainly and absolutely; yet "the inward man is *renewed day by day.*"[p] Years elapse ere the child of nature attains to manhood and to the strength of manhood: in like manner the child of grace "knows but in part," and without attaining it in the days of the years of his earthly pilgrimage, he "goes on to perfection." And herein lies the grand secret of holiness. Men vainly endeavour by their own power and might to make themselves holy. Moral duties are enjoined, and much "fair shew in the flesh" is made: but no hallowing and renewing principle gives it real worth and substantial excellence. Now "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."[q] Ask ye what that seed is? Peter tells us it is "the Word of God." This Word is "incorruptible:" it instrumentally begets an abiding life in the soul, and becomes a principle or habit of universal graciousness and holiness.[r] Thus, what the heathen devotee or the popish monk or the mere moralizer of any age or place cannot by any unaided efforts of their own, accomplish, is accomplished "by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." By his renewing influence, we poor sinners whose hearts by human generation are stony and unrighteous, become fair and beautiful as "the polished corners of the Temple." "The house of the Lord is renewed."[s] Our "flesh becomes fairer than a child's: we return to the days of our youth: we pray unto God—we come nigh in sweet communion with him—and he is favourable unto us."[t] "The new

[o] Titus iii, 5. [p] 2 Cor. iv, 16. [q] 1 John iii, 9.
[r] 1 Pet. i, 23—25. [s] 2 Chron. xxiv, 4. [t] Job xxxiii, 25. 26.

man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."[v] And wherein consists that image? "In righteousness and true holiness."[w] *True* holiness, indeed, must that be which is wrought by the Holy Ghost, and participates the glorious excellency of the infinitely glorious and holy God. "Let," says St. Paul, "that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus:"[x] Now in Christ Jesus there was a lowly, a heavenly, a prayerful, a kind, and submissive mind: and the same mind, in some small measure, at least, of its unparalleled and unequalled excellence will every one born of the Spirit possess: and where this *mind* prevails, will there be, can there be, that loose, unheeded, and immoral *conduct* which so many fear (or pretend to fear) will result from a full and plain announcement of "the Gospel of the grace of God?" Impossible. With the Saviour's mind, there will be, so far as it is imitable, the Saviour's conduct. With our understanding enlightened; our will renewed; our imagination purified; the bias of our affections changed, and our conscience illuminated and enabled clearly to distinguish between what is spiritually good and evil, shall we feel ourselves at liberty to "sin that grace may abound?" Does not the mere supposition of such an anomaly, rouse the indignant feelings of the new man within us, and provoke us with somewhat of an Apostle's fervour to exclaim—"God forbid!" In the very nature of things he that is "of one Spirit with the Lord" must see and judge and feel and desire and hate and love, whatever the Lord does. Failures in judgment and in conduct, there may be, through the remaining sinfulness and weakness of "the old man"—our fallen and sinful nature: but, it is in the grace of the Holy Spirit to renew and perfect us: and "if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by (or *because of*) his Spi-

[v] Col. iii, 10. [w] Eph. iv, 24. [x] Phil. ii, 5.

rit that dwelleth in us:"[y] And because of our present partial and our hereafter entire renewal; "therefore, brethren, we are debtors" and under powerful and necessary obligation—"to the flesh," shall I say, "to live after the flesh? no! "for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, (whatever may be your moral attainments in it:) but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." And mortify the deeds of the body, ye can "not by might, nor by power of your own, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

Need we now say that Spiritual Influence is *sanctifying* in its nature? Wherefore is the Spirit so emphatically denominated '*Holy?*' Not because he is holier than the Father or the Son from whom he proceeds, but because it is peculiarly his office to sanctify or make holy the chosen and redeemed people of God. Hence, sanctification is the renovation of the heart and a consequent reformation of the life. And this sanctification assures us of our election, of our acceptance and of our forgiveness in Christ. For all who experience the sanctifying influence of the Spirit, leading them, as it led Job, to loathe sin and to abhor themselves on account of it; drawing them also into sweet communion and fellowship with the Father and the Son, we are bound to give thanks alway, as brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth: Whereunto he calls them by the Gospel, to the obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.[z] Read we that by power and might in man, he can sanctify himself? Is it the will of *man* even his sanctification? No: all that is good and holy in us, we trace to the will of God: and if we be justified, it is in the name of the Lord Jesus, if we be washed and sanctified, it is by the Spirit of our God.[a] And thus "by my

[y] Rom. viii, 11. [z] 2 Thes. ii, 13. [a] 1 Cor. vi, 11.

Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," are principles of the purest and most ennobling kind wrought in the human heart, and morals that will endure a scriptural test insured in human conduct. "The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are," and when "the head stone thereof shall be brought forth, it will be with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."[b] "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" shall be graven on the fore-front of the Lord's every servant; and they as "an holy priesthood" shall "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."[c]

Consoling also is the Holy Spirit's influence in its nature. The sorrows of the saints are numerous, and sometimes distressingly severe. In tears did the Jews lay the foundation of their temple and amidst manifold discouragements did they build it. How mournfully does even Jeremiah complain![d] How sorrowful was Daniel though a "man greatly beloved!"[e] How, in later days, has a Luther fainted through excess of mental agony, and a Scott approached the frontiers of the eternal world with fear and trembling!* And thus, in his measure, does every child "endure chastening." "In the world," said the world's great Saviour to his followers, "ye shall have tribulation," "Through much tribulation," says a Disciple of Jesus, "must we enter the kingdom of Heaven." Remaining sin; imperfect holiness; aptness to decline in watchful vigilance; the slight of friends; the enmity of the ungodly; and, more than all, the temptations of One wise to do evil, and bent with inveterate maliciousness to "deceive, if it were possible, the very elect," are things that trouble us. But, he whom Christ hath sent to be ever with his people while they live below is most signifi-

* See Milner's chap. in the Hist. of the Church entitled *Luther's Temptations*; also the closing part of the Revd. T. Scott's Life.

[b] 1 Col. iii. 17. Zech. iv. 7. [c] 1 Pet. ii. 5. [d] Lam. i. 1—21. Ch. x. 2, 3.

cantly called, "The Comforter." By his Spirit "the Lord buildeth Zion, and comforts all her waste places."[f] Our Lord Jesus Christ "comforts our hearts."[g] Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, the Churches of Christ find rest, are edified and multiplied.[h] Most sweetly refreshing is the Spirit's influence: We have waived all explanation of his mode of operating on our mind: but—let the sterility and barrenness of winter disappear; let "the time of the singing of birds arrive and the flowers appear in the earth:" O how freshening and reviving to our senses are the perfumes and melodies of Spring! And what produces them? At the bidding of its Lord, the sun shines forth with warmth and power in his beams: the softening breeze sweeps over the face of Nature, and presently where all was wintry cheerlessness the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. We see, we feel, and we enjoy it, though the mysteriousness of the fact our understanding cannot unravel. Thus in the world of intellect and grace, comforts may abound where tribulations abounded. When human succour fails—when the soul of the believer sighs, "There is none to comfort me;[i] and is led to take shelter in God; that promise is fulfilled that says, "I will speak comfortably to her."[k] Then will the heart rejoice anew: New strength will invigorate its powers, new joy will make more willing its willingness to obey, and the consolations of God will not be small with us. Thus "through the supply of the Spirit" and by his cheering and strengthening agency, "the righteous hold on their way and wax stronger and stronger." As the oak by tempests gets more firmly rooted, so they by their trials become "rooted and grounded in love:" "stablished, strengthened, settled;" "rooted and built up in Christ, and stablished in the faith."[l] Jeremiah, amidst all his complain-

[f] Isa. li. 3. [g] 2 Thess, ii. 17. [h] Acts ix. 31.
[i] Lam. i. 21. [k] Hos. ii. 14. [l] Col. ii. 7.

ings was favoured with joy in his heart. Daniel was filled with admiration of the Divine goodness. Luther and Scott, with their every brother in the realms of glory, vanquished every foe and overcame every temptation ere their brows were circled with "the crown of righteousness." In like manner shall every regenerate sinner triumph. "The God of hope will fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."[m] The builders of the second temple were weakened and troubled in building by the people of the land; this was permitted to discover to them their powerlessness: when they wrought "according to the good hand of their God upon them," they wrought successfully, and singular to say, their very enemies were induced to further them, and the rebuilding of the house of their God.[n] So shall it be in the Church of our Redeemer. "The wrath of man shall praise him," and the consoling influence of the Spirit shall unite the several members of his mystical body in one loving and beloved brotherhood. We shall be one with Christ, and Christ will be one with us: we shall dwell in him and he will dwell in us. Of him will the Spirit testify. His things will the Spirit shew us, and "by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," will I with everlasting kindness have mercy on you.

Which leads me finally—not that all is well nigh said of what we could say on the nature of Spiritual Influence, for the subject is exhaustless in matter and endless in delightful contemplation; but for both your and my own convenience, I must *finally* observe, The nature of the Holy Spirit's operation on the mind is *assuring*. Can we be the subjects of his *quickening, enlightening, renewing, sanctifying*, and *consoling* influence, and yet remain unassured relative to our state and safety? If a doubt could be admitted on the point, the Word of God must nullify it. "The effect

[m] Rom. xv. 13. [n] Ezra iv. 4, vii. 28, and viii. 36.

of righteousness—of both imputed and in-wrought righteousness conjointly, we may believe, shall be, says the Holy Ghost, speaking by the Prophet Isaiah, *quietness and assurance for ever.*"[o] "And hereby, says the same glorious Spirit by St. John, we know that we are of the truth and shall *assure our heart before him.*"[p] Assurance of heart before God is the brightest gem of experimental piety. Long may it be with some ere they attain it; and others in whose piety fearfulness and doubtfulness preponderate, may not attain it till they appear before God in the heavenly Zion; but attainable it is, and under the assuring influence of our gracious Sanctifier, we may attain it. "The Spirit's witness" is a sweet reality, however much it may be mocked by any whose fancied power and might are sufficient for them. The Word of life is to be tasted and handled.[q] There must be the substance of reality in what we taste and handle: and "those who, by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil," become by progressive acquisitions of knowledge and experience "fully persuaded in their own mind" concerning all the great and saving truths of the Gospel. Persevering in the paths of rectitude and holiness, they trust to "endure to the end." Enduring to the end, they shall most certainly "receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls." Not by might, indeed, nor by power in themselves do they expect to persevere; but by the Spirit of the Lord. By him they live: In him they walk; and he they believe able to "build them up and to give them an inheritance among all them that are sanctified."[r]

Such, then, is the nature of Spiritual Influence: 'Such, says the Church of England, is the power of the Holy Ghost to regenerate men, and as it were, to bring them forth anew, so that they shall be nothing like the

[o] Ch. xxxii. 17. [p] 1 Epis. iii. 19. [q] 1 John i. 1. [r] Acts xx. 32.

men they were before.' And is there aught in this statement "contrary to sound doctrine?" Speak we not "the words of truth and soberness?" Do we in the remotest possible manner invalidate the interests of sound morality? Do we not well to ascribe all good desires in man to him who alone is good, and all ability to bring good desires to good effect—not to might or power in ourselves, but to the Spirit of the Lord of hosts? Grant our proposition the consent you feel: admit the needs-be for Spiritual Influence; and hear us of your clemency while I endeavour to shew you

III. and lastly, Its *evidence:*

This it will be of essential importance to declare, because the influence under which many act and by which they profess to be guided, is undoubtedly bad. "When the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel; then they came to Zerubbabel and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you, for we seek your God, as ye do. But Zerubbabel and the rest of the chief of the fathers said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God."[s] Here was an apparent zeal for God: but it was all unsound; the Spirit of the Lord of hosts did not inspire it. Jehu cried, too, "Come see my zeal for the Lord:" but his avowed zeal for the Lord was the mere impulse of a proud unhumbled heart, and Jehu "took no heed to walk in the Law of the Lord God of Israel."[t] Hence it should seem that a professional regard for God, for his cause and service, may very possibly exist where "the root of the matter," as Job would call it, is wanting. The evidence, therefore, of which we are about to speak, must differ widely from a Jehu's conduct and all similar conduct that springs from mere natural principle. Respecting, too, the really regenerated character, it may be well here to remark, that he may

[s] Ezra iv. 2—3. [t] 2 Kings x, 16—31.

grieve the Holy Spirit and quench the evidence of his favour.[v] However powerful and mighty his operations may have been, sin will occasion a withdrawment of his influence, and negligence will overpower and weaken every apprehension of his presence, so that a man shall walk in darkness and have no light. Were not the gifts of the Holy Ghost abused by the Corinthians? and yet the Corinthians were a people "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and sanctified by the Spirit of our God." Their privileges became their snare. See in Paul's first Epistle to them, and particularly in its xiv. chapter, how surely it will be found an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God and to neglect the due improvement of his mercies. We need then, I conceive, evidence of a clear, scriptural, and abiding kind, whereby to judge of the Spirit's influence on our mind. And such an evidence will doubtless eventually be afforded wheresoever the Spirit effectually and savingly operates. This we proceed to shew you.

'O how shall I know that the Holy Ghost is within me?' some man perchance may say. Forsooth, *as the tree is known by its fruits, so also is the Holy Ghost.* The fruits of the Holy Ghost are these: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance, and the like. Contrariwise, the deeds of the flesh are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, wantonness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, debate, emulation, wrath, contention, sedition, heresy, envy, murder, drunkenness, gluttony, and such like. Here is now that glass, wherein thou must behold thyself, and discern whether thou have the Holy Ghost within thee, or the spirit of the flesh. If thou see that thy works be virtuous and good, consonant to the prescript rule of God's word, savouring and tasting not of the flesh, but of the Spirit, then assure thyself that thou art endued with the Holy Ghost: otherwise, in

[v] Eph. iv. 30. 1 Thes. v. 19.

thinking well of thyself, thou dost nothing else but deceive thyself.'[w]

"This testimony is true," and affords an excellent *general* evidence of Spiritual Influence. But we will adduce some few particular circumstances that will stamp with unequivocal certainty the reality and the worth of that influence.

An immediate effect of supernatural and efficacious agency is *conviction of sin.* A mere natural man has no conception of the heinousness of moral guilt. Hence spring all the softening and extenuating titles whereby we often hear sin excused and tolerated All will readily acknowledge themselves to be sinners, but few are sensibly conscious of their sinfulness. "In order," says the venerable Newton, "to a due conviction of sin, we must previously have some adequate conception of the God with whom we have to do. Sin may be feared as dangerous or disgraceful without this; but its nature and demerit can only be understood by being contrasted with the holiness, majesty, goodness, and truth, of the God against whom it is committed." This conviction the Spirit by his power and might produces, agreeably to the declaration of Jesus Christ:[x] and where it is produced, sin will be unutterably odious. The awakened and enlightened soul will oft times "groan being burdened." The mere "motion of sin" will be hateful to it. It will shrink with horror from the commission of sin. When the things that it would, it does not; and the things it would not, it does, most aptly befitting its condition will be the "O wretched man that I am!" of St. Paul.[y] Fall even "seven times a day" may a just man; but inasmuch as he falls reluctantly, he shall rise again.[z] Ere the truths of the Word be perceived in their stability and excellence, much erroneous conduct may mark the earlier stages of our spiritual life. Much and laboured

[w] Hom. for Whitsunday. [x] John xvi. 8. [y] Rom. vii, 24.
[z] Prov. xxiv, 16. Mic. vii, 8.

effort may be made to controul corrupt affection and prevailing sin; but to little purpose. By prayer, by repentance, and by reformation, we would fain avert displeasure and insure regard. Any thing would we do or suffer to be free from sin. Self we loathe; and though sometimes we proudly arrogate to ourselves power and might, yet we presently detect the evil and "repent in dust and ashes." Now this experience strongly evidences the gracious presence of the Holy Spirit. It cannot be counterfeited: it is the work of God in the soul. An unregenerate man will contemn it. It would be to him the gloom and melancholy of religion. But, let him know that a saving conviction and consequent hatred of sin, however humiliating and painful it may be, will issue eventually in pardon and peace: it is the wound which endears the Divine Physician: it is the tear which the Lord will treasure: it is the stroke which hews us from Nature's quarry ere we are builded together for the inhabitation of God.

Another evidence of Spiritual Influence will be *A ceaseless restlessness of soul till mercy and forgiveness be obtained.* A person as yet but imperfectly acquainted with religious truth, and as yet also apprehensive of wrath and danger on account of sin, will, as we have intimated, resort to duties—prayer, fasting, alms-deeds, and so on—for comfort and satisfaction. Injudicious and mistaken friends or teachers may advise repentance for the past, and a strict adherence to the Law in future: but "miserable comforters" will they be. After the putting forth of all the power and might a sinful creature can command, he will find himself unable to keep and to fulfil the broad and spiritual commandments of the Moral Code. Every repeated failure will fill him with new alarm and terror: and must necessarily do so; for as the Law cannot afford us inclination or ability to keep it, so neither does it console us in our violation of it. It is, at best, "the Ministration of condemnation;" and "by

the deeds of the Law can no man living be justified." This the Holy Spirit leads the quickened and enlightened soul to see. When this is seen, the soul will begin to see and feel its need of a Saviour—a Saviour that can heal its sorrows and give it rest and peace. Jesus Christ is known and believed to be that Saviour: but need I not some qualification for him? will now be the inquiry of the troubled heart. May I come to him just as I am? Must I not bring with me somewhat of good to recommend me to him?—Somewhat of good is sought and endeavoured: Long and arduous sometimes is the effort to subdue sin and to amend and improve the conduct:—but, where the Spirit of the Lord teaches, all that human might can affect affords no real rest or satisfaction. The dove will be going to and fro in the earth, till it discovers the ark, and is sheltered kindly in its friendliness and quiet. It will eventually be found that "God justifieth the *ungodly*;"[a] that "Jesus hath received gifts for men; yea, for the *rebellious* also, that the Lord God might dwell among them;"[b] and that holiness, which the convinced and humbled sinner so sensibly needs, is not required as a Condition, but promised as a Gift, and secured infallibly as a Consequence of faith in Christ, and union, by the Spirit's quickening, enlightening, and renewing power, with the Son of God. Now and not till now will there be true and enduring comfort. Light will beam upon the anxious heart. The sinner will venture to come before God in the Name of Jesus. Diligence will be used in all appointed means. Belief increases. We see that Jesus Christ is not only *able* but *willing* to save us to the uttermost; and this seen, the soul finds "joy and peace in believing." Amidst occasional fear and much remaining imperfection, the "peace of God" will, nevertheless, "keep our heart and mind through Jesus Christ." This peace will evidence the reality of the Spirit's operation: others, confessedly, may pre-

[a] Rom. iv, 5. [b] Ps. 68. 18.

tend to it: but the peace of moral obedience and conditionary justification will be found void of all gracious agency and therefore destitute of intrinsic excellence.

A further sure and unfailing evidence of efficacious influence is—*A supreme valuation of Jesus Christ.* It is the glory and the honour of God the Holy Ghost to "testify of Him." The multitude of the Christian world may assume the Name of Christ from the respectability attaching to it: they may compliment their Master, too, by an occasional obeisance: but "no form or comeliness will they see in him to desire him." The world's sufficiency is in itself. It is quite easy with the worldling to make his peace with God at any time whensoever it may suit his convenience and inclination to do so. Our text he reverses, saying, 'By my power and the might of mine arm, and not by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts.' Amidst all the confusion of sentiment and conduct that prevails, he can build, as he fondly dreams, a tower whose top shall reach to heaven, and whereby he shall climb to the high abodes of bliss, and fare as well as those who "enter by the Door" into rest and glory. Spirit of the Lord—what means it? "We know not, may many truly say, whether there be any Holy Ghost." Can we wonder, then, that the Lord Jesus Christ should be unknown to such or despised and rejected by them? No, verily: and to be consistent, they ought to renounce the Christian Name, and to stand forth before all in all their naked and infidel unregeneracy. Whereas, to the man whom the Holy Ghost makes Christian, Jesus will be all that is amiable, all that is lovely, all that is desirable. He will be found in every page of inspiration. He will be loved in all his offices. His power will be seen in every star that twinkles with the myriads of its fellow in the heavens: his smile will be discovered in every flower that blooms and lavishes its sweets upon our senses: his goodness will appear in the happiness

of his every creature: his grace in the redemption of every redeemed sinner; unparallelled excellence in his blood and the glory of eternity in his righteousness. The Spirit makes him "all" in the Believer's all. And though the Lord Jesus Christ may not directly and at once become thus supremely valuable to our souls, yet, if we be truly under a Spiritual Influence, he *will* become so; and his becoming so, will be to our souls a most precious evidence of acceptance, pardon, and safety. I would you should read Romans viii, 14—18. Doubtful and worthless is all religion that savours not of Christ. Empty and poor will all ministrations of the Word be, wherein Christ obtains little or no mention. Never will the hearts of the millions of mankind be bowed down as the heart of one man, till "the Lord alone be exalted."[c] Works acceptable to God and pleasing in his sight, there can be none without the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit.[d] Blessed, therefore, is the man who by the supernatural agency of the eternal Spirit can cordially adopt the Apostolic language, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."[e]

One other evidence only of Spiritual Influence shall be adduced ere we bring our remarks to a close, and that is, *A prevailing desire to be holy*. Every thing that evidences the regenerating grace of the Spirit involves this desire: all his operations terminate in our restoration to the image and favour of God. Holiness is essential to his nature: sanctifying is the nature of his influence; and "hunger and thirst after righteousness" will invariably predominate in the soul he quickens and renews. We do not begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh. Sin, as we have seen, is unutterably

[c] Isa. ii, 17. [d] Art. xiii. [e] Gal. ii, 20.

odious to the new-born soul. It is that which beclouds its views; depresses its hopes; darkens the "glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;" and hinders the progress of the soul in love and knowledge: Its opposite will therefore be all-and-infinitely desirable. Whilst the mere moralist adorns himself with the decencies of exterior conduct, and is contented with the approval of man, the Christian Believer pants to be holy within, and to stand perfect and complete before God. Not, be it observed, that he expects his nature scripturally called "the old Adam" to be renewed and sanctified;—*that* he does not expect to be holy till 'tis built anew from the dust of death: but he wants "the new man," the heaven-born nature, the seed of unfailing life and salvation, to grow stronger, more pure, and more prevalent within him. Grounded on Christ, he wishes to "grow up in him." He looks and begs for more and more of the Spirit's transforming influence. Not by might nor by power in himself does he stand: no: "kept by the power of God through faith," he "stands fast holding the beginning of his confidence firm unto the end." And the thought, '*I shall be holy*' ever and anon cheers him whilst conflicting with sin, the world, and Satan. Now, where this desire is prevalent, there prevails the Spirit's hallowing agency; and gathering as he onward goes fresh laurels for his Redeemer's crown, the Christian conqueror shall ultimately be welcomed to the world wherein dwelleth righteousness, and he himself shall be altogether righteous, with, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

I have now shewn you, Beloved, as I purposed, the necessity, the nature, and the evidence of Spiritual Influence. I wish you candidly and impartially to consider our remarks. Mysterious as it may be, I have endeavoured to bring the subject simply and practically before you. It involves, you see, the very essence of real Christianity. It contradicts nothing

which your Bible tells you: it harmonizes with its every truth. You see, too, how surely your own Church is founded on the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being its chief corner stone. Its every service acknowledges the fact and beseeches the aid of Spiritual Influence. All its Ministers profess to be 'moved by the Holy Ghost' to assume the ministerial office: nor will one of all its Ministers so moved forbear to insist on the necessity, the nature, and the evidence of the Spirit's influence. I have done what I could, and now is my work with the Lord and my judgment with my God. Various and contrary as human opinions are—slighted and contemned, too, as the experiences of the saints may be, the Church of Christ goes onward, nevertheless, to prevail and triumph. Noiseless may be her progress, as the Temple of old was in its construction:[f] but sure is her hope; faithful is her Lord, and all-powerful the Spirit that animates, sustains, and comforts her. Abroad is the glorious Gospel of the blessed God proclaimed. Accessible is its truth to multitudes in their native languages. Messengers, on the swiftest wings of love, are saying to Earth's most debased and sinful children, "Why will ye die?" "I will pour out of my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," is the promise that propels to deeds of greatness, and acts of noble and ennobling kindness. Assured of success we labour. To our God we give the glory. By him alone have we will to serve and strength to endure. And while we joy in hope as possessing the earnest of the Spirit, and are sealed ourselves unto the day of redemption, let us, as Nehemiah and his associates did, "arise and build." 'Let us beg God of his great mercy so to work in all men's hearts, by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, that the comfortable Gospel of his Son Christ may be truly preached, truly received, and truly followed in all places, to the beating down sin, death, the pope, the devil, and all the kingdom of

[f] 1 Kings vi, 7.

Antichrist, that like scattered and dispersed sheep being at length gathered into one fold, we may in the end rest all together in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, there to be partakers of eternal and everlasting life, through the merits and death of Jesus Christ our Saviour.'

FINIS.

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MERCURY-OFFICE, SHERBORNE.

ERRATA.

PAGE 46, in line 24 (from the top), for '*Dust*' read 'Just.'
— 51 — 10 leave out 'the' before straits.
— 106 — 5 leave out 'as.'
— 131 — 12 for 'soull' read 'soul.'
— 178 — 17 for 'own' read 'whole.'
— 247 — 14 omit the comma after 'Lord.'
— 303 — 5 for (,) put (.)
— 360, in the note, insert '*if*' before '*he can.*'
— 361 — 1 for 'shall' read 'shalt.'
— 382 — 17 for (?) put (;)
— 399 — 8 for (.) put (?)
— 427 — 17 for (.) put (,)
— 469 — 10 for 'deed' read 'deeds.'
— 486 — 30 for 'wont' read 'once.'

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